

지갑송 퓨전 판타지 장편소설

# 레벨업하는 몬스터 1

# **A Monster Who Levels Up**

**– 레벨업하는 몬스터 –**

**- Part 5 -**

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**[ Fantasy-Books ]**

# Chapter 122

## The Wizard of Bangbae-Dong (1)

Sae-Jin felt like he was stuck in a rut of late.

His growth had slowed down to a crawl. No, more correctly, he lost his reason to grow. The very first goal he set for himself was to live like a human being. To eat three meals a day, to be able to smile and be happy, and at minimum, sleep with a roof over his head – that sort of a simple life.

In the past, he fought hard in order to attain this simple goal. He slept for less than six hours a day. He had no time for fun and games nor did he for love and relationships. And as he failed to get a good enough education, he lived like an idiot and was treated as one. Also, got cheated plenty of times as well.

But now, that was all but distant history. This world, which at one point seemed to have abandoned him for good, was now warmly embracing Sae-Jin. Unlike in the past, people were very much mindful of his presence, and the number of those who cared about him and sang his praises had increased by so much.

It was truly an enjoyable life.

However, he began to feel slight doubt in his heart as well. All those things he craved for, he was able to earn them: all the fame, prestige, influence, and financial muscle.

There was not one soul who hadn't heard of the three words "Kim", "Sae" and "Jin" in Korea. And the company representing his guild, "TM", jumped to the 33th spot in the rankings of Korean companies the moment it opened its doors for business.

The Monster Entertainment Agency had now over 200 entertainers, Knights, and singers affiliated with it, despite it only being in operation for a few short years. And these guys were the best of the best in their professions, too.

Plus, the rumours of a good treatment and great ability to do business had spread throughout the industry, making his agency an object of envy. Once, one of the managers in the agency told him that there was no need to scout for talents anymore,

that people were calling them now, instead.

And, after Sae-Jin created many different 'versions', the Athany doll had become the artifact of the century. The Korean government passed a special law governing all matters related to Athany dolls, called 'Athany Special Law', and blocked the sale of the dolls to overseas recipients by Sae-Jin's Guild. They then took over the process for themselves. Of course, The Monster still retained the rights to sell the dolls within the country's borders.

Although it was indeed a questionable move when seen from the viewpoint of The Monster Guild, even Sae-Jin and Co. couldn't fight against the government's concerted efforts to regulate and keep big corporations in line. In the end, they acquiesced after receiving promises of reduction in taxes and such.

Now, the Athany dolls were being used as a trump card in foreign affairs-related negotiations. From what Sae-Jin heard, currently the dolls were being leased to those countries enjoying a friendly relation with Korea, or to those governments who they wished to be in one with. If the relationship soured for some reason, then the doll was promptly taken away.

He also heard that there were quite a few countries that feared the above example from happening and, although somewhat cowardly, were grovelling in front of the Korean government. Well, a couple of the Athany dolls had an attribute imbued that could 'decrease the chances of Monsters attacking', so there was that.

Just like that, the name 'Kim Sae-Jin' had transcended the borders of his native nation and spread out to the rest of the world.

However... the more his public persona grew larger and larger, his own sense of self was slowly getting lost. He was like a tiny little boat floating aimlessly on a windless open sea.

His one true aim was to uncover the truth of his parents' deaths and to avenge their murders. But the truth about his father being a Mah-in, and his mother being in cahoots with 'Vampires'...well, the more he thought about it, the more doubtful he became, enough to even douse the flames of his anger towards Vampires with cold water.

" ... "

He pushed away all these distracting worms of thoughts and took a glance to his side.

Yu Sae-Jung was gently and rather adorably snoring within his arms. But seeing her like this, Hazeline's face popped up in his mind, making him feel guilty as hell.

Just why did she say all those things back then? Sae-Jin closed his eyes, while trying his damndest to ignore that feeling – the one he had understood to some extent already.

He couldn't sleep. Only dark thoughts continued to creep up into his head.



On a certain day, as the Spring was coming to an end.

Sae-Jin decided to focus wholly on training once more.

Well, it was because there was only one method left right now that could help him alleviate his stress. Currently, it was deemed inadvisable to swim in the East Sea – Kim Sun-Ho personally went there and took photos of a woman who seemed to be *that* Bathory, busy playing around near the beach and sent it over to him.

And he couldn't be bothered to head to the Yellow Sea or to the South Sea – he sure as hell didn't feel like fighting all those dumb sea Monsters who would definitely try their luck with him.

And so, he decided to focus on wielding 'Mana Body' more proficiently. After all, it was better to forcefully train and do something, rather than sitting around doing nothing because he had lost this goal, and let useless thoughts make him even more stressed, instead.

Plus, 'Mana Body' was certainly the most awesome 'Skill' he possessed at the moment as well, so he should really power it up somewhat.

"...I heard that you wish to learn how to use magic?" (Johannsson)

The person assigned to help him train Sae-Jin's Mana Body – albeit unknowingly, of course – was a dude named Johannsson. A second-gen Elf Wizard, he was nominally a Korean by birth, but he more or less looked like a demigod from the Greek pantheon or some such.

“That’s correct. I thought it might be helpful if I learned it.” (Sae-Jin)

“Hah. Really now.” (Johannsson)

However, Johannsson looked quite dissatisfied by something.

The Wizard Tower had sent in a famous Wizard as a tutor since it was Kim Sae-Jin who requested for one, but Johannsson was not liking this situation one bit.

The existence of a Wizard and an Elf combined together possessed biggest pride and stubbornness than anyone else. But he had to teach a complete noob about magic? If it weren’t for the Wizard Tower insisting on it, Johannsson would’ve never came here.

“No, magic isn’t a ‘helpful if you learn it’ kind of thing, like learning how to drive. If you’re thinking of learning it as a hobby, I advise you to give up right now. Besides, you can’t learn magic anyway. You see, wielding magic is a noble endeavor, a privilege only granted to those who have dedicated their entire lives to the pursuit of wizardry.” (Johannsson)

Johannsson didn’t shrink away from Sae-Jin. His tone of voice was confrontational, and the look of dissatisfaction in his eyes was heavy enough to crush a person. However, from Sae-Jin’s point of view, he actually preferred a tutor to be like this.

“...No, well, uh... there’s a possibility it won’t be like that. I could have the aptitude like one of those unrivalled genius, am I right? I’ve got this Trait, you see.” (Sae-Jin)

Wanting to tease the guy a bit, Sae-Jin became overtly chatty. At that moment, Johannsson’s face crumpled like a discarded newspaper in a trashcan, and the colour of red began rising up from his white neck to the rest of his head.

“Hah, hah, hah. You, you’re just too much. See, the thing is, Traits related to wielding magic are incredibly rare. You need to repeatedly study, train, and temper yourself...” (Johannsson)

“I got it, I got it. For now, just fire a magic spell at me.” (Sae-Jin)

“...What?”

Sae-Jin needed to get hit – in other words, be in contact with – for the Leviathan’s innate Skill to activate and ‘accumulate’ the spell. Of course, that meant activating the



Leviathan's Scales as well, but if he just activated it over the area of impact and then quickly disabled it, no one would notice it.

"What are you doing? Please fire one. I'd like to test the abilities of the instructor with this." (Sae-Jin)

"..."

Johannsson genuinely got pissed off from Sae-Jin's provocation, his white skin now dyed in the deep shades of crimson. On top of this, his shoulders were quaking from rough breathing, a clear sign of him barely suppressing his rage.

"Please do hurry up. Are you worried about not meeting my standards? You don't have to fret over such a thing, you know?" (Sae-Jin)

These words finally shattered the 'pride of a Wizard and an Elf', and the sharp debris from the resulting destruction even managed to sever the lines of reasoning as well.

"Orya!!"

Johannsson let out a strange cry as flames formed on his hand. A coagulation of Mana, and billowing with hot winds, this ball of flame looked rather simple on the outside but was a different story altogether inside. That thing was the so-called 'white flame', where flames were compressed tightly, causing its temperature to rise up to an extreme level.

"...Ohhh."

Sae-Jin let out a gasp of admiration at this wondrous display. Unfortunately, Johannsson even found this leisurely attitude of Sae-Jin unacceptable, so he threw the ball of flames with a full-on killing intent.

*\*SFX for a fireball rapidly flying\**

Causing shimmering heat haze as it flew, the white ball of flame slammed into the chest of Sae-Jin, and then with a loud *Boom!!*, it caused a huge explosion that shook the air.

"That was the 'White Flames', the most powerful of all fireballs."

Johannsson's anger had cooled a bit after this, and he explained it out loudly in a satisfied voice. However, there was no reaction beyond the dense smoke.

"...E, excuse me?" (Johannsson)

He cautiously called out.

There was still no reply.

Scared silly now, Johannsson hurriedly used magic to blow away the smoke as cold sweat drops poured down all over his body. After his view had cleared up, he spotted Sae-Jin lying on the floor.

Johannsson got so shocked, his eyeballs nearly popped out. He quickly ran towards Sae-Jin's location and knelt down next to him. The huge wound on Sae-Jin's chest resembled a melted candle...

"M, Mister Kim Sae-Jin!! Wake up, please!!"

Johannsson shook Sae-Jin continuously but there was no reaction. In that critical moment, his life flashed by his mind. Was all the hard work and effort he put in the past as an Elf Wizard all going down the drain because of one moment's blinding rage?

*\*SFX for uncontrollable giggle\**

Fortunately enough, Sae-Jin couldn't hold back his giggles anymore. Johannsson stared at him in a dumbfounded silence, before his face became crimson and...

"I shall be leaving now!!"

...He angrily screamed at the top of his lungs and stomped out of the training facility.



It took full 30 minutes before Johannsson could calm down from the furious rage that was caused by Sae-Jin's prank, and begin the tutoring session properly.

"...Fuu. This is what you call a grimoire, a book where a magic spell has been recorded."

Johannsson pulled out a certain book and spoke at the same time. This book was



shaped rather strangely, however. Its size was as big as an encyclopedia, and its covers were equally thick as well, yet there were only 5, 6 pages in total, making it a rather slim book.

“These grimoires are truly valuable treasures that can fetch upwards of tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of dollars. In this book, the magic I used earlier, the White Flames, is recorded. Now normally, civilians aren’t allowed to look at it, but...”

Johannsson muttered that Sae-Jin would never learn it while he opened the book’s cover.

“Mm?”

Betraying Sae-Jin’s expectations quite nicely – he was expecting to see pages upon pages filled with equations and complicated words – the only thing he could see on the pages were large illustrations showing parts of the human anatomy and various blood vessels. There were strange arrows pointing to different directions within these drawings of blood vessels, as well.

“...What is this?” (Sae-Jin)

“This is a diagram for ‘Mana circulation path’. A magic spell is formed when Mana is fused in a particular way, and you must circulate Mana according to this diagram in order to successfully fuse Mana and ignite the spell into life.” (Johannsson)

“Aha.”

Sae-Jin smiled and let out an exclamation. This was beyond his expectations. If this was the case, then there was no need for him to get hit by magic spells, was there? All he had to was to circulate Mana in his body according to the book to use magic.

“...However, it is not a cakewalk to move Mana within your blood vessels. That is where the ‘chanting’ comes into equation. With it, we’re manipulating Mana, telling it to move this way, move that way, just like that. Not to forget, it’s important to make sure a magic spell doesn’t harm the caster. It’s possible to lose one’s life from his or her own spells.” (Johannsson)

“So, that’s how it is.”

Sae-Jin ignored the Mana circulation path diagram and moved Mana around according to his own methods to recreate that White Flames spell.

For real, Mana began circulating similar to what the diagram was showing on the pages of the grimoire. However, as time passed, small differences crept up, and the end result became completely different.

Since a Leviathan circulated Mana in the most ‘natural’ manner, he couldn’t be in the wrong – which meant that the grimoire’s method was wrong. If he followed the diagram, then the circulation of Mana would end up tangled in a mess, and leak out unnecessarily, to boot.

“Uhm, by the way, this... Isn’t this a bit strange? Doesn’t it feel like Mana is getting all tangled up? It feels so unnatural, you know?” (Sae-Jin)

“...Hah? What are you talking about?!” (Johannsson)

Johannsson let out a hollow chuckle. The coldness in his eyes took a step further from being confrontational, to someone who was looking down on a disgusting insect.

“This grimoire is one of the greatest works ever written by the honoured High Elf Wizard, ‘Toraque von Reiheims. But you’re telling me it’s wrong? Hah. Hahaha. *Aigoo*. You’re making me laugh here.” (Johannsson)

“Oh. Uh... did the greatest Wizard ever write this grimoire?” (Sae-Jin)

For sure, a Leviathan and a human were obviously not the same. A Leviathan was the so-called ‘omniscient creature of Mana’ that could store and understand all things Mana, while humans could only artificially force Mana into their bodies. So, it was a given that humans couldn’t imitate a Leviathan’s way of wielding magic.

“Oh, in that case, many of the world’s grimoires must contain quite a few errors and incorrect bits, then. No, hang on. Most of them must be plainly wrong.” (Sae-Jin)

However, he was currently in the ‘human’ appearance while storing Mana and understanding magic. In other words, not only the Elves but other people could very well follow his methods – the one which was far more naturally suited for the human’s physiology.

“Now wait a damn second here!!” (Johannsson)

Of course, Johannsson shouted out in rage, thinking that Sae-Jin's declaration was tantamount to dismissing the entirety of the Wizarding profession.

"Who the hell do you think you are, to dismiss all our..." (Johannsson)

Kim Sae-Jin decided that, instead of words, it'd be better to speak with actions to Johannsson who was about to burst a blood vessel or two from pure rage.

For starters, he demonstrated the White Flames as written in the grimoire.

"Well?" (Sae-Jin)

Seeing a sphere of white flames suddenly pop up over Sae-Jin's hand, Johannsson's jaw dropped to the floor. His mouth opened wide enough to shove two fists inside.

".....Uh....."

"However, this is too complicated and bothersome." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin snatched the grimoire off Johannsson's hands, as well as a pen stuck on the chest pocket of his robe.

And then, proceeded to scribble on the pages of a \$2.7 million book.

Johannsson quickly snapped out of his speechless daze and realised the graveness of this situation. He then shouted out at the very top of his lungs.

"WHAT THE F\*CK?!?! NOOOOO!!!"

Johannsson rushed in like a wild animal, but too bad, Sae-Jin only needed less than two minutes to complete his 'corrections', thanks to his wonderful dexterity.

"Ah... ah... My... three years' worth of salary is..." (Johannsson)

Johannsson looked at the grimoire, now full of chicken scratches, and despaired on the spot. However, Sae-Jin simply chuckled on the side.

"Why don't you try it out? It should be much easier now." (Sae-Jin)

"...You crazy motherf\*cker!!" (Johannsson)

Johannsson sprang up like a loaded gun and clutched Sae-Jin's collars while spitting out expletives.

"You!! Compensate me, right now!! Now!!" (Johannsson)

Johannsson's reasoning had crumbled to bits a long time ago. He cried out desperately but Sae-Jin simply carried on smiling while summoning forth yet another ball of white flames.

And this one was on a completely different level to the previous ball of flames. If the previous flame was akin to a bonfire, then this one's pure white, ultra-high temperature was as if someone poured a barrel of jet fuel on top.

At this blinding white light, Johannsson was pushed back and he tumbled down to the floor.

"Wh... what the hell...?" (Johannsson)

"What do you think? If you follow what I've scribbled there, your own White Flames spell will be like this as well." (Sae-Jin)

"..."

Johannsson silently studied the ball of flames crazily burning up above Sae-Jin's palm.

This... was completely impossible.

But Johannsson of now couldn't even think of this.

As the words implied, he was in a total daze.

"You can come closer to take a look, you know. I've made sure it can distinguish enemies and allies."

*(TL: "Bangbae" is a name of a suburb in Seoul. "Dong" is a Korean word meaning 'suburb or a district', btw. It's not something rude, I'll have you know.)*

# Chapter 123

## The Wizard of Bangbae-Dong (2)

The expression on Johannsson's face as he looked at Sae-Jin's ball of white flames was quite something else.

But his reaction was understandable. Moving Mana around the body according to one's will was a highly specialised skill set that one only acquired after repeatedly going through arduous training. It was not for nothing the Wizards were seen as true professionals.

But now, a man who had never ever received training nor education on how to wield Mana was, after taking one single look at a grimoire, somehow went beyond simply replicating it, he also corrected the apparent errors and advanced its grade, all at the same time. No matter how much his Trait helped him out here, this was just too...

"I told you, try it out at least once. Like this." (Sae-Jin)

As Johannsson stood there, busy escaping from the reality of the situation, a voice entered his ear canals. After waking up from his daze, he lowered his gaze downwards and saw a grimoire full of chicken scratches... no, rather, pages of content corrected with a red pen.

"Try it according to this diagram. The effect should be same as mine. Mister Johannsson is a great Wizard, after all." (Sae-Jin)

"...Ah, yes... Please, wait for a moment."

Persuaded somewhat by Sae-Jin's words, the still-dazed Johannsson began circulating Mana according to the 'corrected' grimoire.

Originally, 'White Flames' was a spell that appeared on the caster's palm after circulating Mana a few times through one's heart. Shockingly enough, Mana circulated far more efficiently and smoothly than before. Most of all, though – the density of magical energy formed at the end of the process was... It was a lot more explosive than before.

“Well, what do you think?” (Sae-Jin)

Magic had two standards to judge its merits: ‘grades’ of the spells used, and ‘strength of the aura’ emitted when the spell activated.

Higher grade spells were obviously seen as high class magic to perform, while the skill and proficiency of the caster was judged by the strength and the vividness of the hue released by the aura emitted from the spell.

To explain, the difference in magic spells was the difference in their grades, while the difference between the same magic cast was the difference in the deeper hue of its emitted aura. Every Wizard was taught that the biggest factor in determining the ‘aura’ was the Magic Strength of its caster, the ability to control Mana at will.

“ ... ”

That was why, Johannsson was even more speechless. He could not form one line of coherent thought inside his head, as he silently looked on at the hotly-burning ball of flame above his palm.

Hell, he wasn’t even feeling the elation and satisfaction of advancing magic by another step forward. No, only questions bubbled up in his head. Without a doubt, his Magic Strength stat did not grow an inch. Yet, why was this ball of flames burning up so much hotter than before?

“Uh...”

“Didn’t I tell you? My Trait is quite exceptional.” (Sae-Jin)

Johannsson dazedly stared at Sae-Jin, the perpetrator of this unimaginable situation. All Sae-Jin could do was to scratch that itch behind his neck.

“For now... let’s postpone the rest of the tutoring to a later date. I have some unfinished work to attend to...” (Sae-Jin)

“ ... ”

As Sae-Jin stealthily turned around to leave, Johannsson took a large stride forward.

“Excuse me, Mister Kim Sae-Jin!!” (Johannsson)

At his loud call, Sae-Jin's footsteps came to a halt. Johannsson alternated his gaze between the grimoire in his hands and Sae-Jin while carrying a determined expression, and then, handed the book over to him.

"Please, take this. This 'White Flames' is no longer the 'White Flames', and so, it's not the property of our Wizard Tower anymore." (Johannsson)

"No, thanks. I don't need it..." (Sae-Jin)

"Take it."

Johannsson forcibly shoved the grimoire in Sae-Jin's arms. Then, he stared at Sae-Jin who was feeling rightfully awkward at that moment, with a pair of passionate eyes and spoke fervently.

"And if it's at all possible... Can you lend us your power, to our Wizard Tower? No, it's fine if it's not just our Wizard Tower. The world of magic probably hasn't seen a genius like y... Keheum. No, the world has been waiting for the entrance of an extraordinary Trait like yours. Plus, the number of Wizards specialising on attack spells have seen a noticeable decrease of late as well, because the difficulty of mastering such spells. And thanks to that, during the recent Monster incidents..."

Sae-Jin found it a bit difficult to understand everything Johannsson was firing out of his mouth. But he was sure of a couple of things. This guy wanted him to become a Wizard, and...

"Also, I, I would like to be your s, spokesperson or a middleman. I may look like this, but actually, I am one of the most promising Wizards affiliated with the Seoul's Wizard Tower..." (Johannsson)

...He wanted to gain some benefits along the way.

"Hmm..."

Sae-Jin scratched his chin as he fell deep into a thought. He wasn't too keen on hiding behind the veil of anonymity, at least not at this very moment. Well, he got a lot of flak for that fiasco as the Orc Blacksmith, after all.

But as he stood there, looking at Johannsson busy yapping on and on about big contributions towards the world of magic, Sae-Jin couldn't help but think this guy was



quite adorable in his own way. Plus, leaving behind a tangible ‘footprint’ for others to follow, in order to combat the upcoming calamity seemed like a...

“...Mister Johannsson. May I ask you where you live at the moment?”

“Excuse me? Oh, I, uh... live in Bangbae-Dong. But why...?” (Johannsson)

“Nah, it’s nothing. Well, I’ll sleep on it first. For now, have a nice day.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin smirked slightly as he saw Johannsson to the door. And in the hands of the leaving Elf, he was holding the grimoire of the White Flames – the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong Edition.



Grimoires were the most important assets for Wizard Towers.

They played such an important role, the rankings of a Wizard Tower and its reputation among its peers were determined by the number of grimoires in possession of the said Tower.

So, it was obvious that Wizard Towers would be especially strict on the upkeep of these grimoires, as well as on who gets to read them. Restrictions were placed on renting the books out according to a Wizard’s grade, and once successfully renting one, the Wizard was forbidden from leaving the Tower with it until he or she returned the book.

However, those low-grade magic spells, such as Fireball, Ice Arrow, Haste, etc, etc, were deemed unnecessary to store in secrecy by the Towers and so, were available to the public and were even used as teaching materials in schools.

Although these people would rush in like a bunch of wild, crazed animals if a grimoire got leaked out of a Tower whether by mistake or through deliberate means, they still made an exception to these low-grade spells. The truth was, any learner wishing to become a Wizard would have mastered these spells by the age of 14 already.

“...Senior Sehmen, Have you seen this?” *(TL: Yes, really. That’s the name written by the author...)*

Funnily enough, though – the spells that were garnering attention from various

Wizard Towers at the moment were these low graded ones.

“What is it?”

“Here. It’s a blog run by a Wizard whose not affiliated with anyone... There are corrected versions of Fireball’s and Ice Arrow’s grimoires uploaded on it.”

“...Huh?”

The place here was the middle floors of the Korea’s best Wizard Tower, Seoul Tower. This was an area where mid-ranked Wizards stayed while studying various magic as recorded within grimoires, or invented a new spell, or even researched new methods to utilise artifacts efficiently during many different circumstances.

“And why are the grimoires being corrected? No, wait. Which crazy idiot did that in the first place?”

The lowest-graded grimoires almost never saw any corrections. Not only was it a waste of effort to correct the errors of such spells, but from a long, long time ago, these weak-sauce spells were pretty much set in stone for the rest of the wizarding community anyways.

“I was thinking the same thing, but... it’s a weird thing, this.”

When the junior Wizard projected the blog in the air as a hologram, messy pages of a grimoire floated up. With several words carelessly written alongside the path of Mana’s circulation, now it resembled more of a graffiti rather than an actual grimoire.

“...What the hell is this rubbish?”

Normal grimoires simply recorded the paths where Mana was to be circulated. And the individual Wizards were tasked with figuring out the correct chanting that personally suited them to get the Mana’s flow right. It was a poor reasoning without a doubt, one of many inconvenient things found in the closed-off world of wizardry and magic.

“This Wizard wrote that this is a better way to circulate Mana... Apparently, it’s become quite famous among the cliques of the newbie Wizards. I hear the ‘F-grade’ Fireball can display, at minimum, an E+, and at maximum, a D-, worth of power.”

“...Haaah. What the hell is this scam now?”

The Elf Wizard named Sehmen slowly shook his head.

“But, dude. I don’t care about noobs and civilians, but why the hell are you believing in this sh\*t? Don’t you know there are a lot of these quacks popping out everywhere lately? Besides, did you say he’s unaffiliated? Can’t you see that he’s busy showing off, trying to get a little bit of fame so he can enter a good Wizard Tower?”

“Ah, the thing is, though... I tried it out just now...”

“What? You did?”

“Yes. I was thinking the same as you, Senior. But there was just way too many controversies surrounding this in our Wizarding community, so...”

“Okay, fine. So? Did it work as advertised?”

“...Yes. As I said before... it seemed that the spell’s power increased by several grades.”

Hearing this somewhat shocking admission from his junior, Sehmen crossed his arms and studied the hologram projection.

Reading the recommendations such as ‘be more mindful here since Mana can spin around nonstop if you make a mistake’, his nerves were slightly pricked, but still, he calmed his mind and then tried the spell out as it was shown on the diagram...

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

A ball of flames came to life. However, the powerful aura it was emitting was nothing to laugh about. Panicking at the ferocious flames that were busy licking the ceiling’s paint, Sehmen hurriedly controlled his Mana and decreased the size of the Fireball. And this flame became a perfect round sphere that emitted a brilliant light as if it was a miniature sun or something.

“A, as expected of Senior!!”

The Junior Wizard let out a gasp of admiration at that beautiful light. Meanwhile,

Sehmen gulped visibly before shifting his eyes back to the hologram of that blog page. His lips moved up and down silently. He must've been trying to memorise the address of the blog, unbeknownst to the junior Wizard by his side.

"Yeah, it is quite strange. B, by the way, you know who this Wizard is?"

"He's got a nickname. It's the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong. But no one knows his real identity. It has been only a week since he made his debut..."

"Oh, is that so? Anyways... is, is there a higher grade spell than this one on the blog?"

Sehmen asked in a voice that said *I don't need it, but I shall ask since that'll be rude to you, who have gone out of your way to introduce me to it.*

"No. Only 'Ice Arrow' and 'Fireball', and nothing else. But really. Will he reveal the others for free like this? I mean, he'll probably sell it for good money to a Wizard Tower or monopolise it for himself."

"...Hmm, you think so?"

Sehmen took a deeper glance at the blog, and then sent a signal with his eyes to the junior Wizard as if he had come to a decision.

"What should I write here?"

The junior was quick on the uptake, so he clicked on the comment box.

"...Ask if he's got other spells. No wait. That's too obvious. Write, 'What a truly wonderful original method you have, sir. I can only admire you for having the bravery to express your thoughts on the matter which coincidentally, I had been dreaming of all along as well. By any chance, would you like to work alongside our Wizard Tower?' Okay, make sure you send it as a private message. Hey, dude!! I said, PM him, PM!!"

"Oh, my, my bad. I'll erase it and start over..."



Still clueless about the small-ish waves created by the two rectified grimoires he had uploaded as a sort-of trial run, currently Sae-Jin was holding a serious meeting with Kim Yu-Sohn.

“As you have suggested, that hidden village could very well be the sanctuary of Nosferatus. They are the only Vampire types that don’t hunt humans, after all.” (Kim Yu-Sohn)

“Hmm...”

“Are you planning to go there?” (Kim Yu-Sohn)

Sae-Jin was in a dilemma. If he wanted to find out why his mother was cooperating with with these Vampires, he had to go and talk to them. But he was rather fearful of the prospect – just what kind of shocking truth will he get to hear from them?

*\*SFX for a mobile phone buzzing\**

The alarm on Sae-Jin’s phone went off. When he took a glance, it was something like [A new comment has been uploaded on the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong’s blog...]. Ignoring it for now, Sae-Jin concentrated on the documents Kim Yu-Sohn handed over to him.

The Nosferatu’s sanctuary was located right on the boundaries of the Monster field, but there didn’t seem to be any serious danger. Still...

*\*SFX for a mobile phone buzzing\**

His phone went off again. Furrowing his brows, Sae-Jin simply chose to switch the phone into ‘silent mode’ as soon as he saw the words [the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong...]

“...What is it? A blog?” (Kim Yu-Sohn)

“Ah, yes. Not too long ago, I started a blog about magic out of curiosity. But it seems like most of the Wizards do not like what I’ve uploaded on it.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin chuckled slightly as he turned the phone’s screen off, while thinking, *Is it because I’ve made corrections willy-nilly?*

“Well, they are famous for their stubborn pride, aren’t they.” (Kim Yu-Sohn)

“Haha...”

Sae-Jin just laughed it off and concentrated on the documents again.

“It should be better to arrive at the entrance with Mercenaries as escorts, right?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes, sir. That’s the point I’d like to talk to you about. More than likely...” (Kim Yu-Sohn)

The meeting between the two continued on.

All the while, the name of ‘the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong’ was slowly spreading within the communities of Wizards.

# Chapter 124

## Fading Skeins of Thread (1)

On an early morning of a certain day in April.

Hazeline was walking towards The Monster's HQ for the first time in a long, long while. She convinced herself that she was simply out on a stroll, but the truth was, she couldn't muster up the courage and give that *man* a call, so she was hoping to borrow the power of divine intervention.

"...Hmm?"

Now that she was here, though, she noticed that not just the HQ building but the entirety of the Guild's grounds seemed to have changed a great deal. The vast site of the Guild already boasted a stunning scenic view, but there were five or six brand-new monolithic megastructures that she hadn't seen before, and so, she didn't know which one she was supposed to enter. And there were lots of employees surrounding her, all of them arriving for work as this was still an early morning.

She hesitantly stood there amidst the busily-moving bodies of the employees, before slowly approaching one of the buildings where the most of the crowd was headed off to. She could sense a dizzy spell trying to trip her up just now, what with being surrounded by so many people like this, but somehow endured it as she walked up to the entry gate.

It looked like she needed to use an employee's card here; wondering for a bit, Hazeline carefully fished out her Guild membership card and pressed it onto the sensor.

It was then, a loud, automated voice of a woman came out of the speakers, saying, [Miss Shenarine, the Guild member].

'The Guild member'. Those three damn words.

Almost immediately, noisy and lively entrance hall became dead silent, and the eyes of the surrounding people gathered towards her.



“...”

Hazeline froze up like a statue in the very posture of pressing the card to the sensor.

Although their gazes contained the feelings and emotions of envy as well as admiration, she was still very much frightened by the fact that their attention was focused solely on her. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call this a severe case of agoraphobia...

“Miss Shenarine?”

A female employee approached Hazeline, whose head had simply blanked out.

“Ye, yes. I'm Shenarine. P, please save me.” (Hazeline)

Even her tongue had frozen stiff. The female employee tilted her head at this sight.

“Ah... This is TM's HQ building, ma'am. You can still enter it if you wish, but... By any chance, are you looking for the Guild's HQ, instead?”

“Yes, yes, yes. Right, that place.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline pulled the hood down much lower and stuck right next to this employee. It couldn't be helped, since there was no one else to rely on except this woman. The employee seemed to be a bit flustered, but still, she made some calls and then brought Hazeline outside the building.

“It's over there.”

After walking for about five more minutes, they could see the Guild's building. Thankfully, it was rather quiet around here. Letting out a huge sigh of relief, Hazeline finally released the iron vice-like grip on the female employee and lowered her head.

“Thank you so much. I did come here before, but... Everything had changed a great deal.” (Hazeline)

“Oh, no. It's alright. If you need a guide again, please don't hesitate and give me a call.”

Hazeline hurriedly pocketed the business card of the female employee and entered the Guild's HQ. There was only one person present, a receptionist, behind the counter

in the spacious lobby.

Ji—

Hazeline immediately glared at the receptionist. Seeing the pointy tips of the ears, she seemed to be an Elf as well.

*She seems way younger than me, so she should appropriately show some respect without me telling her, right?*

As she continued to shoot the glare filled with her own little delusional thoughts...

“Wah, today’s training was so tough.”

“But still, this much is on the easy side, you know?”

From the passage to her side, accompanied by noisy chattering, a group of Knights walked out, their hairs still moist. It was a group of five women, and besides Yu Sae-Jung and Yi Hye-Rin, the other three were new Guild members.

“Uh? Unni? What are you doing here?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Hazeline was turning around to escape the moment she saw Yu Sae-Jung’s face, but too bad, Sae-Jung recognised her first and greeted her.

“Ah...” (Hazeline)

“She is one of the founding members, Wizard Shenarine.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung made introductions to everyone as Hazeline began panicking inwardly. Then, with a brilliant smile, Yu Sae-Jung took Hazeline’s hand.

“Shall we go and eat together? The cafeteria here makes great food, you see.” (Yu Sae-Jung)



After she was ‘dragged’ into the cafeteria in a daze, Hazeline found it difficult to acclimatise to this noisy atmosphere. Just how could they be this chatty with one another? Her ears might bleed the following day from all this yapping...

“Ah, that’s right. Miss Shenarine, by any chance, do you know who this Wizard of Bangbae-Dong is? I’ve never seen a commotion quite like that one before. I hear that scouts from overseas Wizard Towers are scouring Bangbae-Dong, trying to find him.”

“Ah... I also have no idea who that could be. It feels like a famous Wizard pulling a fast one, but... But I’ve turned my back on the wizarding world some time ago.” (Hazeline)

The Wizard of Bangbae-Dong was one of the ‘hottest’ Wizards currently in the Korean peninsula. And the reason for that was simply because as a Korean Wizard, he got mentioned by the international media. It was like, [Grimoires that are perfectly corrected – just like how it was with the world of Alchemy, will there be another Korean Wave in the world of magic as well?]

“That’s how it was... But it’s okay for you to speak less formally, you know! It’s fine for you to not use honorifics, since you’re so much older than us.”

“...” (Hazeline)

Hazeline really wanted to tell this girl to shut the hell up.

“Ah, right. Uhm, by the way, Unni... Is it really... no? With Jin Seh-Hahn?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

However, Yu Sae-Jung, who was definitely not a Wizard, had something else in her mind.

Jin Seh-Hahn.

Although more than a month had passed, he was still a big topic of discussion among the populace. Hell, it seemed that people would still talk about him even after a year later, what with the martial art school that took after his name, ‘Jin Mudo’, now having over ten thousand disciples, as well as the UN creating a special award called ‘Jin Seh-Hahn: The Hero of the World’.

“No, really, it wasn’t like that. We were... just close.” (Hazeline)

“Ah... really?”

“Ng. But, still...” (Hazeline)

Seeing Yu Sae-Jung looking disappointed for some reason, Hazeline decided to add in

a couple more unnecessary words.

“But I still liked him, a lot.” (Hazeline)

“...”

Suddenly, the lively atmosphere cooled down rapidly. Since this wasn't what she wanted, Hazeline quickly waved her hands around while smiling awkwardly.

“No, no, I'm just kidding. Besides that, Sae-Jung, did you... get a ring already?” (Hazeline)

Hazeline was busy searching for another topic to talk about, but even she realised her own mistake as soon as the words left her mouth. She shouldn't have asked this, for her own sake...

“Oh. Yes, Oppa gave it to me.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Wow. Really? It looks so expensive!! How much was it?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

While Hazeline was swallowing down the bitterness in her mouth on the side, Yi Hye-Rin was busy raising a fuss.

“Actually... he personally made it for me. There's only one like this in the whole world.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Seriously? Oh, my, gosh!! So envious of you right now!! That's an artifact, though, right? What kind of effects does it have?”

“...Well, it improves the skin and smoothes out the wrinkles.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Heok.”

This ‘artifact’ ring certainly possessed one of the most fatal effects for the women folk...

Hazeline quietly bit down on her lips while listening to the conversation. She wasn't being overwhelmed by negative thoughts, such as *I also want one like that*.

‘But I'm the oldest here, though...’

...Well, some part of her felt like that, but it wasn't everything.

Something was rising up inside her. Could it be frustration, anger, jealousy or envy? Or maybe, all of the above?

"Oh, really? Mm... So that's how it was. But, did you know?" (Hazeline)

Hazeline put the spoon down on the table with an audible *tap*.

"The one who met Mister Sae-Jin first was probably me? When he literally had nothing, it was me who borrowed him 5 million. Back then, he pretty much relied only on my help all the time..." (Hazeline)

No one asked her to say this, yet Hazeline really, really wanted to let this one out of her chest.

Other Knights nodded their heads and went, *Oh, so it was like that*, and thought nothing much of it, but Yu Sae-Jung was different. She furrowed her brows and then spat out her reply.

"...When?"

"It was probably... before Mister Sae-Jin became a Hunter?" (Hazeline)

"..."

It was way before Yu Sae-Jung's time. Biting her lips, she desperately rolled her brain into gear. And finally, something did come up.

"I also met someone who resembled Oppa back when I was really, really young, you see? I think I was 7 or 8. It was 14 years ago, in terms of yea..." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"But that was someone just resembling him, though. Please, stop demeaning yourself." (Hazeline)

"....."

Two of them glared at each other with hotly burning eyes.

"Well, still. It doesn't matter who met who first." (Yu Sae-Jung)

“ .. ”

“What matters the most is, who’s standing beside him now.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Hazeline’s eyes began twitching, out of the blue. The newbie members cautiously studied this rapidly worsening mood between the two of them, and decided to quietly vacate their seats. However, Yi Hye-Rin stopped them. Her reasoning was that, it was always better to share such a fun development with other people.



At the same time when Hazeline and Yu Sae-Jung were waging a psychological warfare against each other...

Kim Sae-Jin stepped into the lush, verdant mountainside with two Mercenaries by his side. Breezes caressed the still mountains, causing the leaves to rustle; every now and then, sounds of wild animals growling could be heard.

And within this pristine land where there were no traces of humanity, Vampires were in hiding. Sae-Jin turned his gaze towards the Mercenaries, feeling slightly worried. Since he wanted absolute secrecy, he only brought two Mercenaries along. A man and a woman, they were the best of the best from the Company, personally selected by Kim Yu-Sohn for this job. They were more than qualified enough to act as his guides.

“...I’ll leave the guiding to you guys.” (Sae-Jin)

At Sae-Jin’s command, the female Mercenary called Rejen took a large stride forward.

“Please follow me.”

Sae-Jin followed behind her large, confident footsteps, while the male Mercenary guarded their rear.

And the place beyond the still forest, where Sae-Jin stopped after ten minutes of travel, was...

*\*SFX for chilly winds blowing across\**

...It was a seriously scary-looking precipitous cliff.

“What the heck is going on here...” (Sae-Jin)

Suddenly, Sae-Jin recalled a certain urban legend about satnavs inadvertently leading people towards deadly cliffs. When he glared at the two escorts with questioning eyes, they hurriedly shook their heads.

“All you have to do is to get to the bottom of this cliff. It might be difficult for regular civilians, but it should be perfectly doable for you, Mister Sae-Jin.” (Rejen)

Rejen made her excuse and stood on the cliff’s edge.

“I’ll stand guard here.”

The male Mercenary spoke out this time. Thinking that only this guy got the easy job, Sae-Jin shot him a look of discomfort. However, the male Mercenary feigned ignorance and cautiously avoided making eye contact.

“...So, I must really jump down from here?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin peered over the edge while voicing out his doubts. It sure was steep, this cliff. It was so deep that he couldn’t tell whether there was a solid ground at the bottom, an ocean, or even a pit of flames down there.

“Will you be able to make it? Do you need any assistance?” (Rejen)

Rejen asked in a worried voice.

“No, uh, it’s fine. I can... make it alone. I think.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin breathed in deeply and peered over the precipice once more. But, it still was a steep cliff, still giving him a strong case of vertigo. Plus, there was a powerful wind blowing up from the bottom, too...

“Should I help?”

Rejen asked him again.

“...H, how will you help me?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin reluctantly decided to concede to the reality of the situation.



“Hold on tight.” (Rejen)

Rejen wrapped her arms around Sae-Jin’s waist without a single change to her expression. Only then, Sae-Jin spotted a pair of animal ears hidden under her hood. *Oh, she was a Soo-in.*

Unfortunately, all unnecessary thoughts regarding her race was cut short.

Well, even before Sae-Jin could get ready, she jumped like a cute kitten over the cliff, while still holding onto him.

“KKYAAAHHHH...”

A somewhat pathetic scream of a guy echoed around the cliffside. The male Mercenary slowly approached the cliff and peered over the edge, before he...

“Whew...”

...Rubbed his chest down while breathing out a healthy sigh of relief.



“...Fuu.”

Holding his still-dizzy head, Sae-Jin got up on his unsteady legs. Thanks to calling forth his reserve of Mana before it got too late, he didn’t suffer any external injuries.

“So, where are we going next?” (Sae-Jin)

“Over there.” (Rejen)

At the place Rejen pointed at, there was a plentiful suspicious-looking piece of weird but huge boulder blocking a small corner of the cliff’s face. There was no need to accuse *them* for being way too relaxed with their ‘security’, though. After all, even the ‘condition’ of the entranceway was rather scary dangerous already.

Sae-Jin gulped down on his saliva and approached the boulder. That’s all he did. However, even though he didn’t do a thing, with a noisy grumbling, the boulder slid inside the cliff and revealed a passage.

“...”

He took a glance at his back and saw Rejen without her hood studying the interior of the passageway with lots of interest.

“Let’s go together.” (Sae-Jin)

“...But can I?”

“Yes. But, please don’t interfere while I talk to them.”

Well, seeing that they opened the door without asking, it meant they were probably willing to have a chat with him. Rejen nodded her head and with light, airy steps, entered the passage first.

Inside the passage was dark and surprisingly lengthy. And the further they walked in, the stronger the smell of blood got. But, rather mysteriously enough, this smell was somewhat different from every other Vampire Sae-Jin encountered before. It was a bit hard to explain why.

“...Someone’s coming.” (Rejen)

Rejen was leading the way, but she stopped in her tracks with her ears standing stiff, then she raised her arm and blocked his progress.

“Who’s there!!” (Rejen)

A cry like a wild cat from her, and a shape of a person covered in a thick robe rose up from the darkness.

And it was a Vampire. Unbeknownst to him, Sae-Jin began gritting his teeth. However, this Vampire leisurely studied the two and slowly began speaking.

“...It has been a while.”

*A while?* Sae-Jin tilted his head.

“What do you mean by that?” (Sae-Jin)

“Oh. Ah, my apologies. I mistook you for someone else.”

“...”

Someone else. Probably meaning Sae-Jin's father.

“In any case. We have been waiting for you. Are you willing to follow me in?”

Sae-Jin quietly glared at this figure, and then...

“...Sure.” (Sae-Jin)

...He slowly nodded his head.

# Chapter 125

## Fading Skeins of Thread (2)

It turned out, only the entry requirements were strange, and the place this unknown Vampire led Sae-Jin and Rejen into was a warm and normal house found in any typical countryside village. There was a comfortable couch set and a nice little coffee table in the living room; in the kitchen, a pot was quietly simmering away while a delicious aroma wafted out from it.

“Please, take a seat,” said the Vampire while taking off the robe.

And Sae-Jin was surprised slightly. The gloomy and vague voice coming out from the robed figure definitely belonged to an old man, but the revealed face was that of a stunningly beautiful woman.

When the ash-grey coloured hair and pale white skin were added to that gorgeous facial features, he even felt a certain mysterious attractive charm that was uniquely a part of this non-human being.

“It’s an enchanted robe. It’s possible to manipulate body types, voices, as well as wrinkles on the lower part of the face with this robe.”

His questions got answered pretty quickly. The Vampire leaked out a small grin before heading off to the kitchen to serve the guests.

“Would you like some tea?” (Nosferatu Vampire)

Sae-Jin took a glance towards Rejen. She hadn’t said anything until now, but it was enough to understand her intentions after seeing her ears twitching and her nostrils flaring involuntarily. She was saying, *Gimme that nice-smelling tea already!!*

“We would.” (Sae-Jin)

He had to ever-so-slightly wonder whether it was smart to have a nice, relaxing cup of tea in this place, but then again, he thought it should be fine since he didn’t sense any type of hostility coming from this Vampire.

“Alright, please wait for a moment or two.”

Three minutes later, the female Vampire returned with a tray carrying three cups of tea.

“This is a type of tea that doesn’t exist in our society, so we very rarely drink it.”

Almost immediately, Sae-Jin stopped just short of taking the first sip. If it’s something that didn’t exist among this particular Vampire society, that could only mean...

“It’s not blood, so you can relax and drink it.”

“...Keum.”

Somewhat embarrassed now, Sae-Jin quickly took a sip. It was unexpectedly delicious. It was perhaps even more so for Rejen, since her tail began to sway side to side ever so gently, as if a mountain breeze was blowing around here. Sae-Jin had the urge to reach out and pat that thing.

However, he knew well enough this wasn’t the right time enjoy such a relaxing tea time.

He put the cup down and hardened his expression.

“By the way. Don’t we have something else to discuss first?” (Sae-Jin)

“...Yes. Actually, we’ve been waiting for you.” (Nosferatu Vampire)

Sae-Jin took a glance at the calendar placed on top of the coffee table. There was a cute little circle drawn over today’s date, 4th of May.

‘Did they know beforehand I am coming here today?’

“Allow me to introduce myself first. My name is Lillia von Nosferatu. I am in charge of this sanctuary,” said Lillia, as she met Sae-Jin’s gaze head-on.

Her eyes were the colours of blood, just like every other Vampire. But, unlike them, there was overflowing vitality present within those eyes which made him think of a pair of vivid rubies instead.

“We, the tribe of Nosferatu, wish to cooperate with you, Mister Kim Sae-Jin.” (Lillia)

Her attitude while saying these words out aloud was quite relaxed and laid back. Since this was something Sae-Jin had been expecting, he didn’t show a big reaction, either.

“Your reasons are?” (Sae-Jin)

“It’s simple. Unlike other Vampires, we’re quite satisfied with living on this planet.” (Lillia)

“...Did you coax my mother like this, as well?” (Sae-Jin)

A really faint smile stealthily crept up on her lips.

“Not really. She... personally saw the future.” (Lillia)

“What do you mean by that?” (Sae-Jin)

“You’ll learn its meaning later on, by yourself.” (Lillia)

“...”

What a puzzling thing to say. He couldn’t understand what she was trying to imply there.

“I’ve no idea what the heck you mean by that, but... You sure about cooperating with me?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes.”

“Then, spit it out. Tell me everything about what Vampires are planning to do. Also, what types of underhanded methods they are going to use.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin crossed his legs and leaned back on the couch in a slight display of arrogance. However, Lillia didn’t seem to be offended by this and she simply continued on.

“Firstly, I hope you know what a Fissure is.” (Lillia)

“The gap, a space, between two worlds.” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes, correct. However, when a Fissure opens past to a certain extent, it changes into a portal of sorts. This portal is a separate, unstable miniature world, created when two planes of existence meet and intermingle. Inside this portal, the fabric of space and time loses all meaning, and is completely tangled up in a mess. Other Vampires are planning to use this portal to return to their former world – or, more correctly, return to the past version of their former world.” (Lillia)

“But what are they hoping to achieve by doing that? Even if they do return to the past, isn’t that world still facing the destructio... Ah?!” (Sae-Jin)

A lightbulb went off inside Sae-Jin’s head. Lillia lightly nodded her head.

“Yes. They are hoping to return to the past and stop the end of the world from occurring in the first place. But, the odds of their success are simply far too low. Too long a time has passed by, and that plan won’t succeed anymore. It’s nothing more than a perverse obsession of the foolish Vampires who are in denial about their rapidly fading chances of success.” (Lillia)

Lillia stopped talking and sipped her tea.

“However, we, the Nosferatus, are different from them. We have already come to accept the reality of the situation. Already, we...” (Lillia)

She stared at Sae-Jin with her eyes wide open. It was as if she was trying to recall the fading memories of her past through him.

“...We have seen many things, heard many things, and crucially... have met the ‘saviour’, too.” (Lillia)

Even before Lillia could finish her sentence, Sae-Jin activated the Eyes of the Wolf. Her shoulders quaked visibly when she saw his irides suddenly narrow to a slit. She instinctively sensed a specific, species-unique terror in that moment.

“You aren’t lying, that’s for sure.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin couldn’t spot any hostile intentions from her. All he could spy on, was her desire to continue living in this current world.

“Alright. In that case, what should we do to bring about the end to their schemes?” (Sae-Jin)



“...”

Lillia produced a worn-out notebook from her inner pocket. There were fading letters visible on the corner of this book that read, “...diary...”

“It’s not possible to stop the portal from opening up with what this world possesses in terms of battle power. That is why, we need to increase the military strength of the world, and prepare to match what the incoming situation will potentially bring.”  
(Lillia)

She pulled out a crooked piece of a scale from the pages of the notebook. Seeing this, Sae-Jin’s eyes widened in shock.

“Hey, that thing is...” (Sae-Jin)

“But before all that, there is something we need to do now – to get rid of the biggest stumbling block in our immediate future – to kill Bathory.” (Lillia)

Lillia placed the scale on the coffee table. He was right. Although it was dried up and didn’t look too impressive now, seeing that colour of the ocean still reflecting off of it, without a doubt, this was the scale of a Leviathan.

“Please, take this with you. If you swallow this when you encounter Bathory, you will attain enough power to defeat her.” (Lillia)

“.....”

Sae-Jin forgot to say something. If they knew about this scale, then that meant she, or maybe even the other Nosferatus, knew about his Trait as well.

“However, there is a chance that this one alone won’t be enough, so...” (Lillia)

Lillia then produced a crystallised stone of some kind. It was a marble-shaped item, and strange Mana could be felt undulating from both inside and outside.

“Please, allow us to aid you when you’re going to ‘restrain’ her.” (Lillia)

There was a thin line curving upwards drawn on her lips.



The body length, 2.3 metres. The body weight: undeterminable, due to the scales that were harder than the finest mithril densely covering his body.

Normally, resembling a puppy dog with ears pressed back, but when frowning, rather scary to look at. Currently, referred to as the Azure Dragon, or as the guardian of the East Sea. Also, the object of worship after a new cult called 'The Blue Dragon of the Endless Oceans' was created not too long ago.

...This was the resume of Kim Sae-Jin the Leviathan. The world was deeply interested in the rapid, daily growth of the Leviathan. It was to the extent that when the Azure Dragon hid itself from the world for a bit, the government formed a special investigation team called 'Azure Dragon Observation Team' to find out why.

*Splash, splash, splash...*

At this very moment, Sae-Jin was swimming in the sea after what seemed like ages. And right by his tail, a lone bat was busy flapping its wings and openly followed him. It seemed that, this little thing was either the Bathory woman's 'tool', or some sort of a pet.

*'That Bathory girl wishes to make the Azure Dragon her pet. However, since her lackeys failed the last time, there is a big possibility that she won't entrust the capture to her people and personally take action. You need to seize that chance.'*

After recalling Lillia's words, Sae-Jin deliberately shook his tail and splashed around as if he was playing around. He even tried to shake his a\*s a bit – since, that seemed like a sure fire way to make Bathory do something, anything, even if it's her swallowing down her saliva or some such.

'She's not coming, though...'

But as if she was exercising caution, or maybe even her subordinates desperately stopping her, unexpectedly Bathory did not show up. Only people he ran into, were a bunch of cameras from a cruise full of tourists, and a couple of deep-sea fishing yachts.

"Hmm."

It seemed that today wasn't the fated day. Sae-Jin winked at a certain blonde Elf lady

who was busy taking his pictures and dived underwater.



At the same time.

“Ah!! Look, look!! It’s gone!!” (Bathory)

Stomping on her feet repeatedly, Prillani Bathory couldn’t endure it anymore and let out an exasperated shout. The scene reflected on the surface of a crystal ball in front of her showed a calm surface of the ocean.

“I should’ve gone there!!” (Bathory)

“...There are just too many witnesses in the East Sea, my lady. That is why...”

“In that case, you should have carried out your job properly back then!!” (Bathory)

As a Monster enthusiast, Bathory found it very tough to get a hold of herself after seeing the much-more cute and coquettish Yong-Yong which hadn’t been seen for almost the whole month. That ‘name’ was personally created by Bathory herself.

She so desperately wanted to bring Yong-Yong home and pat that chubby rear immediately...

“My apologies.”

“Do you think I’m trying to fulfil some selfish wish of mine or something, huh? I’m only doing this, because when we tame Yong-Yong, our plans will become so much smoother to carry out, you know? Seriously, Yong-Yong is hundred times better than those useless Boss Monsters that get killed as soon as they appear...”

Afterwards, Bathory continued to grille her underlings for another hour or so. No matter how many times the hapless goons kowtowed and groveled before her, her hysteria didn’t want to die down. However, without this lone hobby of hers, there would be nothing left to appease her boredom, other than wanton destruction and sadistic torture...



*[The Wizard of Bangbae-Dong has declared on his blog that he will publish the corrected versions of the grimoires containing the “C-grade” spells “Shadow Conversion” and “Reflection Glass” very soon.] [He initially said he will favour the Wizard Towers based in Korea when he’s going to sell the grimoires, but now, it is understood that several overseas Wizard Towers are fiercely opposing this.] [Also, the son of the High Elf Wizard Forden who are credited with inventing the original spells, Crystel Forden, is enraged by the fact the spells created by his ancestors are being changed without the family’s approval and thus is seeking appropriate compensation...]*

As soon as Sae-Jin stepped into his house, he heard these words from a news programme, coming from the TV. He groaned slightly as he entered the living room.

“Oh, Oppa, you are home?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung was focusing on the news – probably because, it was about the Wizard that was making a lot of waves of late.

“Why would a Lady Knight pay so much attention to a measly Wizard, I wonder?” (Sae-Jin)

He spoke leisurely and pulled Yu Sae-Jung into an embrace.

“Well, I might be a Knight, but I’m also the only child of the Dawn, you know. I can’t afford to miss news stories like this.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“...But, doesn’t the Dawn’s intelligence guys know all of this already?” (Sae-Jin)

“But that’s from the Dawn’s perspective. With news programmes, you can find out what the public thinks.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

It was then, a graceful middle-aged Elf lady showed up on the TV screen. It seemed that it was time to interview the expert on the matter.

[Colleen Rex, Professor of the School of Wizardry, A-class Wizard affiliated with the Seoul Wizard Tower.]

– *He's a genius. It might sound like an easy notion to weed out inconsistencies and enhance an existing spell's effects, but in reality, it's just as hard as inventing brand new spells. Well, Knights and Wizards who have circulated Mana at least once before will know what I'm talking about. Taking in that point, although we don't know who this Wizard of Bangbae-Dong is, he is definitely one of the most outstanding geniuses in the world.*

– *Then, in your considered opinion, just how far will this Wizard reach in the near future?*

– *Hmm... As you may well know, the world of Wizardry is separated into field application and theoretical studies. In the school of 'theory'...he might easily exceed A-class.*

– *But, exceeding A-class, isn't that the territory of the Grand Wizards?*

– *Hohoho... Is that right?*

“What do you think, Oppa?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung suddenly asked him.

“A, about what?” (Sae-Jin)

“No, well. About that Wizard of Bangbae-Dong. I heard that magic spells he corrected now number ten and that it's almost like new spells have been invented, since the spells' powers increased by the maximum of double the original. That's a huge deal, almost as big as business transactions of a single quarter for a Wizard Tower.”

“Oh, really? But still, isn't this... a bit too much brouhaha over nothing?” (Sae-Jin)

Yu Sae-Jung's eyes sharply narrowed as if she couldn't believe what she just heard.

“What the, what do you mean by that, a brouhaha? Uh-whew. Oppa, seriously now – you gotta educate yourself a bit more.”

Seeing her shake her head like that, he suddenly didn't feel all that nice. Before he hit the books, it seemed that he needed to 'punish' her first...

“...Just because you go to the Korea University, that doesn't make looking down on

people a cool thing to do.” (Sae-Jin)

“No, it’s not like that. It’s common sens... Kkyack!!”

Sae-Jin turned the TV off and pushed her down on the couch. And then, as she tried to utter the words of apology with a crimson face, he blocked her mouth with his lips.

“Wait, I’ve got a ton of things... to... do... No, I need to... go... Ah. Aang... Heu... aang...!”

She tried to escape from his grasp by throwing a tantrum, but everytime she did that, Sae-Jin found a way to conquer each of her erogenous zones in brilliant strategic manoeuvres.

Before long, the lights were off, and their clothes formed a small heap on the floor.

*Creak, creak, creak...*

And also... Accompanied by the constant creaking of the couch’s frame, the pleased, blurred moans filled up the living room.

# Chapter 126

## An Orc and a Lady Knight (1)

The Nosferatu woman said that since there wasn't much time left until the Fissure widened up enough to become a portal, the Bathorys had to be eliminated as soon as possible. She also added that the world needed to acknowledge the upcoming calamity and concentrate on increasing their military might as well.

But, in all honesty, Sae-Jin just couldn't really grasp the level of danger that might appear when the portal opened up for good. No matter what it was, without having a personal experience on the subject, a person wouldn't be able to understand it. Still, he planned to do his very best in the meantime.

*\*SFX for Mana buzzing about\**

Currently, inside a closed-off arena, where the space was being illuminated in vivid blue and the only sound accompanying it was the buzzing of the Mana's emission, Kim Sae-Jin was in the middle of trying to find original ways to utilise the 'Mana Body'.

*"...\*Heavy groan\*..."*

And the new method he came up with, was to extract Mana out from his body and to coagulate it into a stone or a crystal. It was no different than trying to create Mana Stones artificially. Plus, Mana Stones created through this method were completely different from the Monster's Mana Stone.

First of all, the properties of these Stones could be altered to suit Sae-Jin's tastes. He could freely control the degree of hardness and strength of each stone as if it was metal ore, and create weapons and armours made purely of Mana. And not only that, a person could even swallow one of these Stones, too.

Seeing that regular Monster's Mana Stones weren't hard enough to craft into armaments, and that they also possess harmful elements thus making it impossible to eat them, these new Stones could be called revolutionary.

"God damn. I might really die at this rate." (Sae-Jin)

However, it did prove exceptionally difficult to squeeze out Mana and force them into a blank canvas of a Mana Stone. It was to the point where, only after making three such Stones, he was this close to passing out from the dizziness.

“...Hmm.”

After gulping down lots of cold water, Sae-Jin shifted his gaze towards the three Mana Stones emitting brilliant blue shine that he had made. There was not one speck of imperfection visible on or within them. He felt that there were literally endless applications for these Stones.

He could make a few more and use them in crafting various armaments, or he could sell them at astronomical sums to Knights and Wizards by advertising these Stones as ‘Mana Supplements’. After all, those guys were the types to go absolutely mad when it came to all things Mana-related.

“...Hah.”

Suddenly, a wry chuckle escaped his lips as he thought about this and that. Whenever he browsed internet, he read lots of people busy writing that Sae-Jin’s Trait was a cheat, a biggest cheat no less. But without a doubt, he couldn’t deny that they were all 100% right on the money.

Well, it was indeed beyond the realm of common sense – he was currently in the middle of making a Mana Stone artificially, an item that most normal people would shout out “Eureka!!” when picking one up off the ground.

*\*SFX for a mobile phone vibrating\**

While wryly ‘praising’ himself inwardly, his phone vibrated. He took a glance, and saw that the call was from Yu Baek-Song.

“Hello?”

– “...Yeah, it’s me.”

“How are you? Although, I’m surprised by this sudden call. I heard you’re really busy nowadays.”

One of the few people who proudly boasted the title of ‘Kim Sae-Jin’s close associates’,



Yu Baek-Song was being seen as the most promising person currently serving in the government. And accordingly, she was really busy with receiving lots of great 'treatment' from nearly everyone. Hell, one could probably buy twenty-odd skyscrapers with all the bribes she had refused so far.

– *“Hey, you forgot about the favour you asked me before?”*

“...Mm?”

Sae-Jin's head tilted in confusion. He could hear the groan of disappointment from the receiver of the phone.

– *“You told me to get you a certain Mana Stone, didn't you? A mutated Ebony Wolf's. I just got it, sent in from India.”*

“Aha.”

He then remembered. There was one Skill he hadn't been utilising until now. It was a Skill where he could 'recall' and control Monsters by using either their carcasses or their Mana Stones. However, he could only control three Monsters, so he was very carefully choosing which Monsters he'd like to control – and then, predictably, the whole thing slipped out of his mind completely.

“This is a great timing. Let's meet up right now.”

– *“...Now?”*

“Yes. Are you busy with something?”

– *“Not really. There's an appointment, but I can cancel that one. But the thing is... I just got out of the shower.”*

“...”

She probably said that without thinking too much at all.

Plus, he even had a lover.

However, those were the words that held the scary power to shake a man's heart...

“...I’ll be there. Right now.”

Hanging up immediately, Sae-Jin departed and arrived at Yu Baek-Song’s house seemingly in one single breath.

And no, it was definitely not because he wanted to see her moist hair. Not at all.

The mutated Ebony Wolf, known as ‘Lakcorn’. This Monster made its base in the Himalayan mountain range and was infamous for its might and intelligence that didn’t fit regular wolves. It even fought off and safely escaped the hunting parties of upper Mid Tier Knights and High Tier Hunters.

Sae-Jin had chosen this creature to be his pet dog. (?) But it had been over six months and he completely forgot about it.

“Wow. Even my Mercenary Company couldn’t do it. How did you pull this one off?”  
(Sae-Jin)

The Mana Stone wasn’t the only thing that Yu Baek-Song had procured. Below the Mana Stone, the carcass of the Monster was on the floor, its remains still a bit warm to the touch.

“We did the Athany diplomacy with India not too long ago, you see. I sneaked in a couple of conditions during the negotiation, if they were willing to hunt the Lakcorn for me.” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Oh, really?”

“Yup. I’m sure a nationwide hunting operation took place over there. They probably called in 1000 Knights to hunt this Monster.” (Yu Baek-Song)

Seeing her brightly smiling face, adorably implying that he should praise her good work, Sae-Jin ended up inadvertently patting her head. Her white hair was still moist and soft to his touch.

“Thank you. As expected, there is no one that comes close to taking care of things better than Miss Yu Baek-Song.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Keu, keheum. I’m not a Great White Tiger for nothing.”

As if she got embarrassed, she slowly pushed away his hand but still couldn't hide her reddened face. Also, her nostrils continued to flare up while she smelled his scent and her ears carried on twitching as if to capture one more word of praise.

"Well, in that case, I'll see you again later!!" (Sae-Jin)

Unfortunately for her, though – Sae-Jin didn't praise her anymore.

Because he quickly exited her house while grabbing both the Lakcorn's Mana Stone and its carcass, utterly unable to control his excitement at the thoughts of riding on a Wolf's back.

*\*SFX for the door slamming shut\**

And so... left alone by herself, Yu Baek-Song glared beyond the now-slammed-shut door and pouted unhappily.

"...Was it so difficult for him to praise me some more?!"



As soon as leaving Yu Baek-Song's house, Sae-Jin immediately headed off towards the Monster field. After changing to the Hero Orc Form, the mere thoughts of riding on the real Lakcorn that he only saw on TV screens caused his heart to boil in anticipation even harder.

"Hmm, hmph."

After taking a couple of deep breaths, Sae-Jin carefully picked up the Mana Stone and activated the Skill. Both the Stone and the carcass of the Monster Lakcorn suddenly scattered like fog, and then, turned into a stream of energy and entered his chest.

[The Ebony Wolf (Mutated version) has been absorbed into the Warrior's Heart.] [The Ebony Wolf (Mutated version) has been added to the list of summonable Monsters.] [The Ebony Wolf's Stats has been increased accordingly to match the new owner's current Stats.] [The current grade for the Ebony Wolf's combat ability is: (High) grade.]

The alert window informed him of the smooth integration with the Mana Stone.

Sae-Jin the Orc closed his eyes and activated the Skill. And it was oh-so simple. All he had to do was whisper, “Summon” in his mind. Soon enough, murky Mana flowed out from his heart and a form made up of swirling blue and black colours, rapidly took shape.

It was like a hologram display drawing on air. When the two different coloured Mana streams combined, the giant wolf, Lakcorn regained its life once more.

Even though it was just a measly wolf, its body was big enough to stand shoulder to shoulder with Sae-Jin’s Hero Orc Form. And those brilliantly sparkling eyes surveying the world displayed the valor of a warrior quite clearly.

Feeling utterly satisfied, he stroked the wolf’s back.

*\*SFX for a repeated low growl of a canine\**

Lakcorn recognised its new master and growled in satisfaction as well. Sae-Jin the Orc smirked and then, placed the prepared saddle on the creature’s back.

“Giddy up!!”

After climbing up the saddle, Sae-Jin lightly drummed on the back of the wolf. He didn’t have to point it to a direction. The wolf still understood his intentions perfectly and kicked the ground hard, rushing towards where he wanted to go.

*\*SFX for air blowing past\**

This was truly a wondrous turn of speed, fast enough to effortlessly leave behind the surrounding scenery in a blur. And the sonic booms left behind their wake uprooted trees and caused maelstrom of dusty storm clouds. They were so dominating, even the Monsters in the High Tier hunting ground scurried away in fright by their approach.

However, as Sae-Jin was deeply admiring this speed that was several times faster than what he imagined...

“Everyone, take a step back!!”

...From somewhere, a resolute yet harried voice came to him. Was someone out hunting right now? When he took a glance over yonder, a head of a huge white bird rose up among the tops of tall trees, and then...

*PPPHIIIEEEECKKK—!!!*

Out of the blue moon, it screeched out one of the most unpleasant cries anyone had the misfortune to hear. It was so terrible that it was definitely two thousand, no, four thousand times more ear-bleeding than fingernails scraping on a blackboard.

Sae-Jin's anger shot up through the proverbial roof after hearing that terrible noise. It was the kind of sound that could pretty much enrage anyone, so both Lakcorn and the Orc couldn't control their tempers anymore.

He grabbed the reins tightly, and Lakcorn quickly changed the direction, heading towards the origin of that noise.



After handing over the Mana Stone and the carcass of a rare Monster donated by India to Yu Baek-Song, Kim Yu-Rin received an urgent message from the government that said, "a highly dangerous Monster has appeared within the High Tier hunting ground".

The Monster was called the Giant Swan. As the name indicated, it was a huge white bird and it was one of those growth-type Monsters that grew stronger with the passage of time. So, she quickly formed a subjugation team and came here.

She figured everything would be okay. Although the Giant Swan was a High Tier Monster, her team was made up of twelve High Tier Knights as well.

Unfortunately, none of them could have imagined that the condition for its growth was 'getting damaged'.

"What the f\*ck is this sh\*t... What should we do now, captain?!"

After it got sliced up by the Knights' swords, it began clawing madly all around it and started getting ready to evolve. And the terrifying energy the damn thing was emitting easily exceeded that of a regular High Tier Monster.

"...Everyone, take a step back!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin ordered the other Knights to retreat, and then changed the shape of her Gungnir from a sword to a spear. She quickly compared the amount of Mana left in her and the types of 'effects' her Trait could imbue her attack with. It seemed that knocking the Monster out was not possible. In that case, at a minimum, she'd have to take a limb from...

*PPPHHIIIEECKKK!!!!*

She was grasping the spear tightly, when the Giant Swan let out an explosive and unpleasant roar. This unexpected cry easily penetrated past the Mana Barrier and attacked the ear canals, disrupting the flow of everyone's Mana. And as a result, the ears of the Knights began bleeding. However, the Giant Swan did not stop its sonic attack.

"That son of a... K, kheu..."

*KKKKHIIIEECKKKK!!*

Kim Yu-Rin forced her body to stand up, even if she was stumbling about. Her aim was that huge opening of the mouth. Her eyesight was blurring away, but she just had to...

*\*SFX for a loud roar of the Orc\**

It was then, another ultra-loud roar blanketed the shrill cry of the Giant Swan.

And right after that, *puhurng!!!*

The sound of powerful impact resounded out. Following that sound, a mace flew towards the wide-open beak of the Giant Swan. It all happened in a blink of an eye, but as Kim Yu-Rin was focusing hard at that moment, she witnessed it all in slow motion.

That slowly-flying mace and the roar definitely belonged to...

*\*SFX for a shorter but angrier roar of an Orc\**

From her left, exploding out of the tall bush, a lone Orc jumped out. He was, without a doubt, the Hero Orc that proudly boasted a powerful physique, and now, it was even riding on an overwhelmingly frightening wolf Monster.

Sae-Jin was slightly taken aback by the sight of Kim Yu-Rin staring back at him.

However, taking care of his anger took precedence, first of all. That ugly screech from the crazy-a\*s white bird was more unpleasant than any other provocations he'd ever heard before.

*PPPHHHEEECKK!!!*

Even though it got hit in the face by a mace, the Giant Swan didn't give up and continued to screech out.

*“\*SFX for the loud barkings of a wolf\*”*

*“\*SFX for a loud roar of an Orc\*”*

Both Sae-Jin and Lakcorn responded with enraged roars.

*PPPHHHEEECKKK!!!*

But still, the Swan didn't want to back down, not even by an inch.

In the end, the anger reached the top of his head, and with his entire body becoming crimson, the Orc madly dashed towards the large white bird.

# Chapter 127

## An Orc and a Lady Knight (2)

With its eyes completely frenzied, the big wolf carrying the Orc madly pounced on the Giant Swan. Kim Yu-Rin didn't even have enough time to get shocked. Even if it was the Hero Orc, this was going to be seriously dangerous – as soon as she thought of this, her legs moved towards the Orc all by themselves.

*Kwahck!!*

The mace thrown by the Orc smacked the Swan's beak and caused a big wound before returning back to his hands like a boomerang. Now that was one truly crazy sight to behold.

*– Ppeuph!!*

After its beak got attacked, the Giant Swan finally stopped its terrible screech, but its whole body started glowing in intense red. That was the very bad sign of it getting ready to grow, or to evolve further, as it were. However, both the Orc and Wolf didn't really care about such small details.

*Ta-aht!!*

The wolf Lakcorn leaped high, which put the Orc right by the Swan's nose. The mace overflowing with Mana swung right in front of the Monster. A powerful impact noise exploded out, and the shock wave shook the surroundings. Unfortunately, though – it seemed that the Giant Swan used the damage to actually push itself to evolve one step further.

*\*SFX for steam rising\**

The quickly-reddening body of the Monster began decreasing in size and emitted incredibly high temperature. Opaque white steam carrying intense heat blocked the sky, melted nearby trees, and burned the ground around it.

This heat wave was so intense, even Kim Yu-Rin's Mana Barrier was quaking beyond



her control, getting really close to shattering into bits.

She quickly turned around and shouted out at her teammates.

“RUN!!”

Her shout echoed within the mountainside like a lone scream. The Knights hesitating at the rear finally stepped back a bit more. Seeing this, Kim Yu-Rin gulped down a large dollop of her own saliva. Was it possible to withstand what was about to come? Not her, but the Orc?

She couldn't remain undecided for long.

She ran towards the Orc. She did this not because of some unnecessary emotions deeply rooted in her heart, no. She convinced herself this was the case, that it was because of the curiosity and questions towards the Orc circling inside her head.

She ran towards the Orc and grabbed his hand. And at the same time...

The Orc looked at her. She too, looked at him. The wolf between them barked. And, from the body of the Swan, a massive boom exploded out.

*KKKWAAHHAAANNNNGGGG!!!!*

An explosion so violent, it seemingly crushed the world in its wake; a jet-black cloud shaped like a horrifying mushroom rose up from the site of explosion.

In that moment when the explosion descended on them, the Orc pulled Kim Yu-Rin in his arms and activated the Scales of Leviathan. Well, he still had to save this crazy woman regardless of her reasons for walking into the blast radius all by herself. Whoever he was acting out as in that moment – Kim Sae-Jin or the Hero Orc – both of his personalities didn't want her to die, after all.

The explosion of the ground became smoke and rose up to the air. Following the apocalyptic chaos that shook the entire mountainside, a heavy, choking silence descended. However, the land upon where the two of them stood no longer existed. The site of the mind-numbing explosion was caved in like the mouth of a volcano, the end of the pit not visible to the naked eye.

*Swish~ swish~*

Hazy dust particles settled down on the ground like nuclear fallout. There were a handful of the giant white bird's feathers mixed in among this fog.



Sae-Jin the Orc slowly opened his eyes within the still darkness. Only now he felt that his head, lost among the burning rage and gnawing instincts, had cooled down for him to think properly.

Gradually, his blurry vision sharpened up.

He saw a beautiful woman, right in front of his nose – her comfortably-closed eyes, perfectly shaped nose, lips slightly wet from blood. And he brushed those lips with his thick finger unconsciously.

“Euh, mmm...”

Kim Yu-Rin showed some reaction, which caused the Orc to stiffen up a little. For now, he thought it would be a good idea to extricate himself from this awkward position, where it kind of looked like they were hugging each other. But she was using his arm like a pillow.

He wondered whether to simply yank his arm loose, but in the end, he just let out a long sigh, instead.

“Fuu-woo...”

However, if there was one thing Sae-Jin didn't count on, it was that the sigh of an Orc was incomparably powerful to that of a human's.

The storm winds escaping from the Orc's lips arrived at her eyes, blowing her hair back and shook her eyelashes in the process. And so, she woke up from her slumber, just like that.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Two of them blinked and continued to stare at each other. From Kim Yu-Rin's point of view, this was way too fast a change of pace for her.

Well, the thing was, from the moment when the Orc suddenly appeared, and when she got mixed in the explosion while chasing after the Orc, and then... After he grabbed her into his arms, and finally, to this very moment where his face was completely filling up her view, all of these happened in just over a minute for her as far as time frame was concerned.

“...You, should stand now.” (Sae-Jin)

After staring at each other like this for who knows how long, the baritone voice of the Orc tickled her ears.

“Ah, yes. Right...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin quickly got up. The Orc also stood up.

“W, where do you think we are now?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

With a slightly reddened face, Kim Yu-Rin asked him while stealing a quick glance at the Orc.

“Don’t know. Possible, we fell deep underground, because of explosion.” (Sae-Jin)

“...You could be right.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin couldn’t help but feel a distinct sense of déjà vu right now. There was a situation like this one in the past, although there were quite a few more people back then.

“This place, not a cave like last time.” (Sae-Jin)

The Orc said, as he lifted his head to look at the ceiling. No visible light rays permeated from up there, but it sure was very high...

“Ah, in that case...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin pulled her mobile phone out from the pocket. But there was no way an electronic device would survive such a shocking explosion.

“It’s not working...”

The Orc shook his head while thinking, *Obviously it wouldn't...* and then he surveyed his surroundings a little more closely.

He didn't sense any particular 'funny' flow of Mana, and he could hear the sound of underground stream flowing by not too far from his position. So, this place could be...

'...Could this be, nothing more than a simple accident?'

This was different from back then, when he got caught in the isolation barrier trap. He simply fell underground after getting sucked into that large explosion.

"Euh, euh!! Euh, euhk!!"

"...?"

But quite literally out of the blue, Kim Yu-Rin began struggling for some reason, like a person trying her very best to finish her... *business* in a toilet.

The lashes on her tightly-closed eyes trembled while both of her fists were clenched real tightly. It was kind of a funny scene to look at, but at the same time, he had seen something similar to that before...

"...I, I can't wield Mana." (Kim Yu-Rin)

After ten minutes of struggle later.

With a face of someone who just lost her country, Kim Yu-Rin looked at the Orc while being on the verge of tears.



Inside this dark space, deep beneath the surface of the planet, a bonfire was burning and spreading warmth, with two 'people' basking in it while idly spending time there.

They were thinking that, since this was an accident, there should be a rescue team coming for them soon enough and that they should stay there for now.

"I think it's the Giant Swan's ability." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin suddenly opened her mouth while she stared into the fire.

“There’s a wound on my back that could’ve been caused by the explosion. That Monster’s Mana must have invaded my body.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“..”

The Orc didn’t say anything. She took a glance at the Orc and continued.

“I think I’ll be fine in a week’s time.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Fuu.”

Then, the Orc let out a lengthy sigh and stood up.

*Is he going to hit me?!*

Kim Yu-Rin stiffened up noticeably. As if to confirm her worst fears, the Orc did reach out towards her, and then...

*Kwajeeek!!*

He broke off a big chunk of rock protruding from the ground.

“...Wh, what are you planning to do with that?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin somehow regained her calm from her shuddering and asked him. The Orc didn’t say anything and simply used the Orc’s Smithing Technique. Then, the uneven surface smoothed out, and its shape lengthened into a pole-like form.

“...Wah?!”

“Orcs, make weapons like this.” (Sae-Jin)

Feeling slightly awkward by Kim Yu-Rin’s way-too shocked reaction, Sae-Jin the Orc said something and then broke off another piece of rock.

Afterwards, the Orc continued to break off rocks from the ground and then, grinded them, combined them, and reshaped them for the next 30 minutes or so.

Initially, Kim Yu-Rin watched on with an interest at what he was trying to achieve, then couldn’t help but be deeply impressed by the end results.

*\*SFX for sounds of hammering.\**

At the place where the Orc's hands went past, a small but remarkable stone hut stood proudly.

Although there was a big penalty in the Orc Form, the usefulness of the A-level Goblin's Craftsmanship displayed here was still quite amazing, indeed.

"Wowsers, just how did you..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"You, sleep inside." (Sae-Jin)

She was so shocked, she couldn't even properly finish her sentence, but the Orc spoke as if it was nothing much.

"I, sleep here." (Sae-Jin)

This time, he poured Mana to the ground. The solid stone floor rose up in a squarish shape and then changed into a stone bed.

"Uhm, that... Thank you." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin muttered as she stroked the pillar of the rather adorable little stone hut.

However, she unhurriedly pitter-pattered right next to him and smiled instead.

"But we~ll, I'm not feeling sleepy, though~?"

The ends of her eyes curved upwards coquettishly. The tips of her hair slightly brushed against his arm.

*What the hell is up with this aegyo, all of a sudden?!*

Sae-Jin did his very best to calm down his trembling heart.



About half a day's stay in the underground prison later.

Kim Yu-Rin had been fiddling with the unresponsive mobile phone and a

communication crystal for a while, before a loud grumble came out from her stomach.

“Aht...!”

It was an embarrassing slip-up. She stopped doing everything and stole another quick glance at the Orc. She felt like hiding in a hole.

The sound should have been loud enough to surprise him, yet the Orc didn't even seem perturbed as he just yanked a big chunk of meat out of his Expanding Pocket.

Kim Yu-Rin's rounded eyes began sparkling dangerously.

The Orc increased the strength of the bonfire and began an impromptu BBQ right there. After 'nicely' sharing the tasty meat, the look of pure satisfaction was writ large on her face as she rubbed down her filled-up belly.

However, not too long after that, she began smacking her lips noisily. The Orc dumbfoundedly looked at her, as if to ask if there was a group of homeless beggars living inside her stomach or something. She quickly waved her hands in denial, and said that this time, it was actually her thirst acting up.

Without a word, the Orc went in search of the underground stream.

He only needed ten minutes as it was nearby. When he poked a hole on the wall where it seemed just about right, a small but steady stream of underground water began leaking out. He quickly fashioned a container out of stone and filled it with water, taking it back to Kim Yu-Rin.

She was definitely embarrassed by her powerless self that was only good for annoying the Orc, but still, drank the water with an ecstatic expression.

“Kkyah... aht.”

It was so, so refreshing.

The Orc chuckled after seeing her reaction, and Kim Yu-Rin also smiled faintly after seeing his expression.

Now that he was done with all the side work related to her, Sae-Jin the Orc sat down on the ground and started the maintenance on his mace. While listening to the

rhythmic sound of metal being sheared off and smoothed out, Kim Yu-Rin slowly closed her eyes.

Unfortunately... a new problem arose after about one hour had passed by. It was to be expected, really. After all, she had eaten and drank, so the next natural action of the human digestive system would be...

“...Euh, euhk...”

She searched for a ‘good’ spot while desperately holding it in. It seemed that, this nature’s call was for both numbers... But no, she told herself that she could handle something like this.

The patience and endurance of a Knight was nothing to scoff about, after all.

But her face continued to get redder and redder. Her thighs began rubbing against each other all by themselves, and her body was shivering uncontrollably.

Only then, she realised something quite important.

A Knight without the support of Mana was not a Knight – and that those who ‘had it but lost it’ were weaker than those who ‘originally never had it’...

“Uhm, excuse me... I, ah, need to go somewhere, real quick...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Finally unable to hold it in anymore, she began to shuffle towards some unknown destination in uneasy steps. Too bad, this was a wide-open area with no place to hide...

“Inside the hut. I made a small place.” (Sae-Jin)

“ ... ”

Kim Yu-Rin’s body froze still after hearing the Orc’s words that sounded like a divine oracle from the heavenly saviour.

“No, no, it’s, it’s not like that... I just want to wash my hands, you see. I am, a little bit... a clean freak... you see...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

While uttering something, she ever-so slowly and painfully inched closer to the hut.



“Fuht.”

She then heard the Orc’s low chuckle. Kim Yu-Rin bit down on her lips while tears formed on the corners of her eyes.

However...

While the two of them were enjoying a bit of an event that could have happened in everyday lives...

An ‘egg’ lying not too far from where they were began trembling slightly.

And this thing was... an egg the Giant Swan spat out before it went kaboom.



*[A powerful explosion occurred during the Giant Swan raid, causing Knight Kim Yu-Rin to go missing in action. The Raven Knights Order has dispatched an emergency rescue team to the site, but it is now understood that, due to the Giant Swan’s unique parasitic and harmful Mana acting like a nuclear fallout, it has proven to be exceptionally difficult to descend to where she might be...]*

A breaking news broadcast could be seen on the TV screen located within the office of the Mercenary Company’s director of operations.

“Yes, Miss Sae-Jung. Ah, the Guild Master is currently...” (Kim Sun-Ho)

*[At the same time, the Knights witnessed the Hero Orc appearing in the middle of the raid...]*

Acting as a temporary director, the sweating Kim Sun-Ho found himself busy conversing with the “Boss Madam” while keeping an eye on the news broadcast at the same time.

“I believe that, he might not be able to return home for a few days due to a difficult assignment. But you don’t have to worry. Since Miss Sae-Jung was in the middle of training, he told me personally that he will contact you as soon as he finds the right time...” (Kim Sun-Ho)

– “...Is that true?”

“Of course. Why would I ever lie to you?”

– *“Well, then. Do you know where Hazeline Unni is right now?”*

“She’s probably at the Yoseon Alchemy House at this very moment. You could call her and find out.”

– *“...Hmph. I understand.”*

Yu Sae-Jung ended the call. Kim Sun-Ho put his phone down and groaned out.

“...Just why did you go and interfere in that raid, boss?” (Kim Sun-Ho)

He bitterly murmured to himself.

At that moment, the news broadcast was showing the footage of the Hero Orc riding on top of a giant wolf rushing towards the white bird, while Kim Yu-Rin was hurriedly chasing after him.

# Chapter 128

## An Orc and a Lady Knight (3)

After spending a rough estimate of 18 hours within this dark and gloomy place.

Kim Yu-Rin was inside the stone hut, while Sae-Jin the Orc was lying on the stone bed, both of them trying hard to fall asleep – however, their heads were full of own complicated thoughts and so, it proved to be a difficult task to get the much-needed shut-eye.

In Kim Yu-Rin's case, the moment she laid down to sleep, curiosity and questions regarding the Orc, as well as worries over her subordinates who might have somehow gotten mixed up in that explosion continuously popped up in her head.

'Surely, they should be okay since they are all quick on their feet. They better be okay...'  
' (Kim Yu-Rin)

Unlike her, though, the Orc's thoughts were a bit more related to the current issue and perhaps, just as urgent as well.

'It might get really dicey if I stay near her for too long. Gotta get out of this place soon, or I need to stay away from her...' (Sae-Jin)

First of all, the basic instincts of the Orc was the problem. Of course, he was carrying around a special potion in the 'Spiritualised' form inside him that could suppress all of the Orc's baser instincts.

As this Orc Form was getting more powerful with each passing day, there had been a few times already when he almost lost all his reasoning and went berserk after some stupid Monsters tried to get on his nerves.

Of course, there were no stupid Monsters in this dark, gloomy cavern to test his patience, but still, there was an even more threatening existence right next to him.

The Orc turned his head and took a slight glance at the hut. He made sure it was as sturdy as it could get, and also added in a function that, once the door was closed from

inside, it'd be locked automatically. However, as it was made out of nothing but stone, it was true that he could destroy it in seconds if he went berserk once more.

'Enough for four days... This should be fine, if it's this much.' (Sae-Jin)

After checking the amount of potion left, he let out a long sigh.

The two people wrestling with their own thoughts began slowly drifting into the calm embrace of sleep as the hours ticked by.

And so... the next day had come, and inside this dark space where it was difficult to tell whether it was morning or not.

Kim Yu-Rin woke up from her slumber thanks to several loud *Pphung! Pphung!* coming from outside the hut – and to some extent, from the sound of her own stomach grumbling as well. Slowly opening her eyes, she got up from the soft stone bed – rather contradictory, but true in this case – and looked outside from the hut's window.

*Kwahang!! Kwahaaang!!*

The Orc was busy pounding on the poor, innocent ground.

"...What on earth is he doing?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin exited the hut, her head full of questions.

*\*SFX for the door creaking open\**

The Orc turned his head towards her direction after hearing the door opening.

"What are you doing?"

She asked him while rubbing her eyes.

"I make vibration. To tell the people coming for us, where we are." (Sae-Jin)

"...Ah."

Finally understanding what was happening, she then sat down on a stone chair that seemed to have materialised out of nowhere just now.

Kim Yu-Rin decided to stay and watch the Orc's construction efforts in order to wake her sleepy head up completely. Watching those rippling muscles and hearing the crystal clear sound of the mace, sweat drops dancing in the air, and his hair, wet from the proof of his labour...

As she was happily taking this sight in, all of a sudden, she heard the sounds of something powerfully running towards her direction from some distance away. Surprised out of her mind, Kim Yu-Rin quickly jumped right to the Orc's side.

"It's a Monster!! Get ready for battle!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin shouted out so, and reached down to her waist to grab her weapon, Gungnir. A force of habit built over the years on the job, it was.

Not too long after, a Monster did appear for real. She bravely pulled out her sword and pointed the stunningly sharp edge towards a huge wolf.

"...Please, pick up your weapon!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"...No need."

The completely tense Kim Yu-Rin took on the battle stance. But the Orc simply chuckled and approached the wolf in unhurried steps.

"What?! Be careful!! I can sense its dangerous aur..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Even before her scared words could continue, the Orc began stroking the head of the wolf in a display of utter composure. And the wolf received the patting in a posture full of adorable charm, as if it had reverted back to being a puppy or something. Its eyes arched like a pair of new moons, its ears folded back and its tail swayed from side to side in quiet contentment.

Without a doubt, this was a bona fide Monster, judging from its large, threatening size which was easily twice that of a regular full-grown man...

"It's my pet." (Sae-Jin)

She nearly dropped her sword then.

"...Pardon?"

“Name is Cornlak. You saw me riding it.” (Sae-Jin)

“.....Ah. Aha.”

Although it was hard to believe those words, she had to believe them regardless, after witnessing the situation for herself. Kim Yu-Rin sheathed her sword back into its scabbard and sat down on the stone chair. Then, she carefully observed the wolf which was busy making a strange whimpering noise while showing off lots of *aegyo*.

As an aside, she liked small, adorable and fluffy dolls. Well, they were cute, so there.

Of course, this wolf wasn't small at all. However, seeing it full of *aegyo* as if it was a fox cub and not some menacing wolf, it was way too...

“E, excuse me, Mister Orc?”

Unable to endure it anymore, Kim Yu-Rin stutteringly opened her mouth. Her cheeks were somewhat dyed in red without her knowledge.

“Mm?”

“Can, can I also, uh, touch your Cornsalad, too?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Cornlak.”

“Oh, Cornlak. Sorry.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The Orc nodded his head and lightly drummed Cornlak's back. Kim Yu-Rin stealthily got up from the chair and approached the huge wolf. Although it growled a bit towards her, when Sae-Jin the Orc signaled it to behave itself, the wolf quietly laid down on the ground.

She carefully reached out and ran her palm against Cornlak's back. Then, her eyes popped open extra round. If she was to describe the sensation in two words, it was 'soft' and 'fluffy'. The fur of regular wolves were stiff and hard, yet this guy was in another dimension altogether.

It was as if she was touching the skin of a newborn, so soft and malleable. Her moods improved simply by touching it – this, this was a brand new world she had never ever experienced before...

“Wow.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Her eyes sparkled dangerously as she continued stroking Cornlak’s back. At first, it was her hand only, but now, not only her cheeks, but she was using her entire body to rub against the wolf. That was how out-of-this-world addictive this feeling was.

*Whimper, whimper...*

Suddenly getting violated by Kim Yu-Rin, Cornlak sent gazes full of helplessness, but its owner simply sent back a gaze of his own that commanded it to endure for now. *(TL: Well, the author used a pun-based joke here, but regrettably, it’s un-translatable, as usual. See, the thing is, “Yu-Rin” in Hanja form can also mean “violation”, or “invading another’s space”. So the author wrote that the wolf was getting Yu-Rin’ed by Kim Yu-Rin.)*



Within this dark and gloomy space where there was literally nothing but two people and a giant wolf, all they could do was to talk to while away the time.

While being inside the warm ‘embrace’ of Cornlak, Kim Yu-Rin asked the Orc a fair few number of questions while carefully studying his reactions.

She asked, how had he been living so far, why did he chase her out back then; where did he learn to speak Korean, where did he find such a huge wolf as a pet, and just where he was until now, before making this sudden reappearance?

All the answers the Orc provided was short – he chased her out because he didn’t like her, and the rest, they were not something she should know.

“...”

And so, thanks to his short and curt replies, she was quite angry right now. With deeply pouting lips, she was glaring at the bonfire, while she roughly rubbed the poor and blameless Cornlak’s back. Sae-Jin thought dandruff might fall like snow at that rate.

“By the way...”

Kim Yu-Rin opened her mouth again, just as Cornlak was getting fatigued.

“...Do you know a human named Kim Sae-Jin?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

She asked while glaring at the Orc with a pair of blunt eyes. Stiffening up slightly, Sae-Jin fell into a slight dilemma here. This woman was definitely suspecting something. Although he had no idea what she was thinking of, without a doubt, he had to be very mindful of where he stepped here...

“I know him.” (Sae-Jin)

“And how do you know him?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“None of your business.”

Immediately, she snatched a handful of Cornlak’s fur. When the wolf got surprised and raised its head, she apologised profusely to it and gently patted its body.

“Sure, it may not be any of my business, but... I ask, since I’ve never seen that person enter your village not even once until now.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...”

The Orc didn’t say anything. He was currently too busy thinking of how to respond at the moment, actually.

However, Kim Yu-Rin misinterpreted his silence as yet another “None of your business”, and her brows furrowed in dissatisfaction. And so, she ended up spitting out loud the suspicions that had been brewing inside her head until now.

“Are you making weapons for that person?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...?!”

At this completely unexpected dog’s barkings, the Orc turned to look at Kim Yu-Rin. She then displayed quite a skillful body movement technique to steal away the mace resting next to the Orc.

“What the...?” (Sae-Jin)

“Take a good look. See this? This mark over here, and...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin pointed at a certain faint mark on the metal handle of the mace, and then reached down to her Gungnir...



“My swor... Huh? What the? Where did it go?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

...She was going to unsheathe Gungnir, but it wasn't there anymore. She hurriedly patted and searched all over her body in sheer panic.

“But, but, but, why... I couldn't have lost it, have I?! No, it was with me until just now...”  
(Kim Yu-Rin)

As Kim Yu-Rin's face slowly turned purple while she sputtered words out in confusion, the Orc silently pointed towards Cornlak's direction. She then quickly shifted her gaze towards the wolf. And sure enough, there was a hilt of a sword sticking out from the corner of its maws. She immediately spat out a lengthy sigh of relief.

“Uh-whew...”

Since its owner's weapon was stolen, the ever-so-loyal Cornlak had stolen the weapon of the thief, instead...

“Eii, you really surprised me there, you know, little baby. Please give it back.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Finally, some of the lost colour returned to her face. Kim Yu-Rin grasped the hilt and tried to extricate the sword, but Cornlak didn't want to let it go.

Cornlak could be called the 'avatar' of the Lakcorn of India, and its jaw strength was as much as ten tons, maybe even more. Didn't matter how hard she may have trained herself as a Knight, without the aid of Mana, she was not going to win against such jaw strength.

“H, hey, come on now, stop fooling around and... Euh!! Euh!! No, wait. Hey!! What's the matter with you?!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin wrestled with the hilt for a considerable length of time, before suddenly realising the situation – then, she tossed the mace back towards the Orc's thigh.

*\*SFX for an item being smoothly sliding out\**

Only then, Cornlak immediately let go of the sword.

“...And now, take a look over here.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

After getting her treasured sword back, Kim Yu-Rin flicked Cornlak's forehead, and then showed the small mark inscribed at the bottom of the hilt.

Even the Orc was stunned by this revelation. Well, most people would never be aware of small, unconscious habits of theirs.

"You can also clearly see that, right?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"..."

The Orc looked straight into her eyes. Thankfully, it didn't seem like she had thought of the possibility that 'the Orc could be Kim Sae-Jin' yet. That was par for the course, really. Just who on earth could dream up a scenario where an Orc and a human were the exact same person?

"Yeah, so?" (Sae-Jin)

And so... the Orc decided to maintain his *very* thick skin for now. He was planning to not say anything unnecessary, and let her continue on with misunderstandings and suspicions for the rest of her life.

"...Pardon?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"So? So what?"

"No, hang on... Did you make this..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"Maybe, Kim Sae-Jin make this. Maybe, I borrow from him and use mace." (Sae-Jin)

The Orc deliberately hardened his facial expression and frowned deeply.

"But, still..."

"No matter. Kim Sae-Jin, I trust much more than you. And, none of your business. Stop crossing the line." (Sae-Jin)

...Of course, he'd trust himself more than anyone else, really.

As if she still had something else to say, Kim Yu-Rin's lips moved up and down, but in the end, she returned to her seat while sighing out grandly. Then, she hugged Cornlak

with a depressed face and whispered meekly to the wolf.

“Hey, would you like to come to my place instead of that Orc’s?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Hmph.”

The Orc smirked and secured the mace on his hips. Afterwards, the two of them didn’t say anything else for a while.

10 minutes, 20, then a hour later... The time continued to flow without restraint and resulted in the poor ol’ Cornlak getting much-unwanted forceful coat-shedding.

*\*SFX for winds suddenly picking up\**

Winds began blowing suddenly in this dark arena. Could it be the rescue party? Both of them turned to look at the direction where the wind came from.

However, instead of rescue personnel, they spotted a bird-like creature over there.

*\*SFX for a chick’s cries\**

Tweeting like a little chick, it was a white bird that kind of resembled a long-tailed tit or maybe even the Korean crow-tit, complete with a pair of round and shining eyes, as well as a small and narrow beak. It’s body was on the big side for a real bird, but it was about as big as a regular puppy dog and thus, rather intensely adorable.

“...What is that thing?” (Sae-Jin)

As the Orc was trying to figure out the source of this strange aura hidden below that cute countenance, suddenly, Kim Yu-Rin stood up as if she was in a trance.

*\*SFX for a chick’s cries\**

She then began walking dazedly towards the tweeting (?) bird.

It was at this very moment when the Orc’s alarm bells rang around like crazy.

The flow of that dangerous Mana pooling around its beak, that was a type of a Breath attack...

*FFFHHHHEEECCCKKK!!!*

The tweeting bastard (?) suddenly spat out a stream of white flames. It was the lethal White Flames, the most powerful of all hellish flames out there.

*PAAAAHAAAANG!!*

White flames of the Breath displayed mighty destructive power as the attack spread out in a half-moon shape. It was the moment when the dark, gloomy cavern was lit up with a blinding white light.

# Chapter 129

## An Orc and a Lady Knight (4)

The Breath fired out well before the Orc could even react. However, it still collapsed into nothingness when a flash of golden sword light swept by. As expected, even without the support of Mana, the power of Kim Yu-Rin's Gungnir was something else entirely.

"What the heck is going on...?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin panicked somewhat as she stared at this strange bird.

*Pphiiiack!! Pphiiack!!*

As if it got pissed off by the failure of its attack, the bird angrily tweeted out while flapping its wings all over the place.

The Orc firmly grasped his mace and pulled Kim Yu-Rin back behind him.

"Dangerous." (Sae-Jin)

The bird chirped like a little chick again, its bright and intelligent eyes staring at both of them.

The Orc took a glance at Kim Yu-Rin. For some weird reason, she was busy licking her lips...

"Doesn't matter. Still dangerous." (Sae-Jin)

"...I'm aware of that already. I also witnessed it spew out a Breath just now, you know." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"If you know, then concentrate properly."

Sae-Jin the Orc activated the Eyes of the Wolf. Unfortunately, even with the eyes that could easily suss out everything about the opponent, he couldn't spot that bird's

weakness at all. In other words, that monstrosity of a bird didn't have a weak point.

Of course, that didn't mean it was the most powerful being in the world. And it sure looked plenty weak, enough to make him think that it would be squashed into a fine meat paste no matter where he lands a hit...

"But, but, isn't it still a youngling? I mean, isn't there... a way to tame that creature?"  
(Kim Yu-Rin)

Although she was currently in the state of being charmed, what she said did have some merit to it. If it was possible, then that bird would become an enormously powerful ally.

The Orc fell into a slight dilemma.

In that short gap, the Monster spat out yet another Breath with a loud *Ppheeek!!* This time, the Orc stepped up and blocked it. The attribute imbued to the mace called [Destruction, A level] could even render magic attacks completely useless; when the Breath met the mace, it dispersed like blowing dust. At the same time, the thoughts of taming the darn thing dispersed as well.

"You, want to tame that? That thing, very bad. Ugly attitude." (Sae-Jin)

"..."

Kim Yu-Rin wordlessly scratched the back of her neck.

"Must kill it. Now." (Sae-Jin)

Maybe because it was nothing more than a new born, although it did possess abnormal strength, it was still way too early to fight against the Orc and Kim Yu-Rin. However, considering its young age, no doubt the damn Monster would evolve into something far more dangerous in the future.

"Oh well, if it's for the best, then I guess there's no choice." (Kim Yu-Rin)

After agreeing with the Orc's assessment, Kim Yu-Rin grasped her sword tightly while her expression darkened. As if it had sensed the oozing killing intent, the bird opened its beak wide. The Orc and Kim Yu-Rin tensed up, wondering just what type of Breath this thing might spew out next.

*\*SFX for an empty stomach rumbling\**

A sound that easily shattered the seriousness of the situation resounded out. The Orc shot Kim Yu-Rin a glare automatically. She quickly shook her head vehemently, her face reddening.

“...Honestly?” (Sae-Jin)

“Y, yes, it wasn’t me!! Really!!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The Orc didn’t retract his accusing stares, but shifted it towards Cornlak who was busy growling at the bird. However, there was no way a specially-summoned creature like his wolf would feel hunger. That left only one other possibility...

“...That chick, don’t you think maybe it’s just hungry?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...”

“We might be able to lure it with food, you know.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin’s voice was full of mirth.

However, the Orc quickly saw through the ominous gathering of Mana within the bird’s innards.

“No. Step back!!” (Sae-Jin)

The Orc left Kim Yu-Rin in the care of Cornlak and dashed towards the bird. Too bad, the creature flapped its wings and hurriedly ran off into the air.

And so, the bird circled around the two’s head for a bit, before opening wide its beak once more.

The Orc quickly threw the mace at the bird. But before it could hit, an inconceivably powerful storm winds rushed out from that tiny beak of the Monster.

No, more correctly, rather than ‘rushing out’, it was more like the Monster was sucking *everything* in with that small mouth.

If one was to compare this to the previous Breath attacks, it wasn’t all that threatening.

But still, there was one big problem – it wasn't just a threat only to the Orc.

*\*Plop... \**

Suddenly, Kim Yu-Rin collapsed. The Orc hurriedly looked back. Riding on the swirling air, her Mana was being drained out and sucked into the Monster's mouth.

Initially, the colour of escaping Mana was the usual blue, but soon, its hue darkened gradually, until... it became the hue of blood as it left her.

She was going to die at this rate. The Orc threw the mace again, but the damn Monster easily evaded the thrown weapon by floating this way and that.

In the end, he chose to use 'Mana Crafting'. He remotely manipulated Mana found in the air and formed a spear out of it, then fired it at the belly of the Monster.

*Kwajeeck!!*

It seemed that the Monster couldn't dodge the spear that shot out from literally the thin air. One of its wings were badly maimed, which finally prompted the creature to stop sucking out Kim Yu-Rin's Mana, and then, in panic, it flew higher and higher until it disappeared into the darkened ceiling.

Of course, he couldn't chase after it, even if he wanted to. The Orc's instincts were busy telling him to climb up the cavern walls just to smash that deceptively-cute face in to a mush, but there was someone else who needed his attention far more urgently.

With shaking hands, Sae-Jin quickly drank the potion designed to suppress the Orc's instincts.

Finally regaining his senses, Sae-Jin walked back towards Kim Yu-Rin. If there were blood mixed in with Mana, that meant the forceful absorption had nearly pushed her over the death's doorway. He could easily see that her face was wanner compared to before.

"Oii!!"

The Orc shouted out as he shook her.

At his thunderous shout, she broke free from the grips of unconsciousness and slowly



opened her eyes.

“You, still alive?” (Sae-Jin)

Within her blurry sight, Kim Yu-Rin could see the panicking face of the Orc.

Didn't he say that he chased her away, because he didn't like her anymore – so why was he showing such panicked face, she wondered. But then, she no longer had the leisure to worry about such a thing.

As she silently closed her eyes once more, something slipped inside her mouth.

It was a weird feeling thing, this – rock hard, yet soft and malleable. There was no taste to it, and equally, no scent either. But her body reacted first and she began swallowing down this strange foreign substance. At the same time, a mysterious effect took hold of her body, but this was as far as her memories could record, as her consciousness fell deep into darkness.



The emergency treatment proved to be successful. If he didn't make a artificial Mana Stone on the spot and feed it to her, she would have drawn her last breath right here.

Although she had received a life-threatening injury, as her body was in the most tip-top shape imaginable, it didn't take too long for her to open her eyes again.

She looked gaunt and haggard as too much of her Mana got sucked out, but he actually preferred this appearance. The thing was, the Orcs' original nature made them hate the sickly and the dying. The medicine had run out already now, so this was better, compared to being healthy and full of life.

“You, can't use Mana yet?” (Sae-Jin)

“...Yes, unfortunately...”

The nameless bird that stole away even the last drop of Kim Yu-Rin's Mana was long gone by now. And there was not one sign of the rescue party coming for them. The only fortunate thing was that, there was more than enough food collected inside his Expanding Pocket. That was it.

“...You, feel bad somewhere?” (Sae-Jin)

“I’m more or less okay... for now. But I should have realised that there is parasitic Mana flowing inside me. I’m a Knight, so I should have been prepared even for the unexpected...”

The parasitic Mana. Normally, there were a few special Monsters that possessed completely different anatomy and type of Mana compared to that of humans. And the ‘parasitic Mana’ was one of the most bizarre and difficult to deal with, among the unique types of Monster Mana out there.

This flow of Mana came with some form of sentience, and it would voluntarily enter another lifeform’s body. Then, it would start blocking the natural flow of the host’s Mana, forcibly ‘stockpiling’ it.

And when the owner of that parasitic Mana showed up again, the stockpiled Mana, along with the parasitic one, would be absorbed into the Monster.

So, when viewed from that point, the white bird was an exceptional specimen, indeed. The host was not just anyone but *the* Kim Yu-Rin, and it didn’t even take 20 seconds before she was driven nearly to death by its ferocious appetite.

“...I’ve survived thanks to you. Mister Orc, thank you very much.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Call, if you need something.” (Sae-Jin)

Chuckling slightly, Sae-Jin the Orc tried to exit the stone hut, but...

“...Excuse me.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

She stopped the Orc from leaving, and with her head peeking out from below the improvised bed sheet, cutely added a couple more things.

“I, uh... am feeling hungry...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...Wait here.”

The Orc didn’t take long to cook up some gruel and brought it to her.

“...I can’t move my hands well.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

He ended up feeding her.

“Thank you.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Finally, Kim Yu-Rin was satisfied and gradually fell asleep.



Pretty soon, the Orc became a butler – or maybe, a servant.

When she got hungry, he cooked more gruel for her; when she tried to get in some exercise with that still-recovering body of hers, he pushed her back into bed; when she was bored, he sat there and listened to her, and even helped her fall asleep when she couldn't do it alone...

However, there was one upshot to all this: she didn't come outside the hut anymore, so when she was resting inside, Sae-Jin could revert back to human form to catch his breath.

Meanwhile, all these foreign happenings became a refreshing experience and a wonderful memory for Kim Yu-Rin. She enjoyed the gentle happiness rising from this feeling of being someone precious. Well, although she had looked after many of her subordinates, not once had she received such one-sided care before until now.

Yes, she was stuck in this darkness, and yes, there was that parasitic Mana still squirming inside her, yet she felt good everyday. Of course, she was still human, so before she went to bed, brand new fears and even bouts of depression rose up one after the other. But thanks to the Orc coming to visit her bedside, she could endure it.

As a result, her smiles occurred far more frequently than ever before.

And so, while relying on each other, or more correctly, the Orc becoming the unconditional anchor for her to rely on, a week went by.

While her Mana wouldn't circulate until she received proper medical care outside, still, she had regained most of her vigour back.

“Rescue party, here very soon.” (Sae-Jin)

The Orc spoke as he patted Cornlak. He found this out after using the Eyes of the Wolf

to thoroughly observe the sky-high ceiling. Countless Knights and rescue personnel had seemingly completed all the necessary preparations to begin the rescue operation.

“...Is that so?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

However, Kim Yu-Rin showed a strange reaction that was neither happiness nor sadness. While pouting, she began clicking her tongue. Cornlak stealthily left the Orc’s side and trotted over to her.

When the Orc glared at the huge wolf with dumbfounded eyes, Yu-Rin stuck her tongue slightly out. *Merong*.

“...When we get up there, we won’t run into each other again, right?”

Kim Yu-Rin wordlessly brushed Cornlak’s fur for a little while, before asking him as if she was talking about the passing weather.

The Orc replied coldly.

“Yep.”

“...”

She buried her head in Cornlak’s luxurious fur with a depressed expression.

Her mind was getting messy once more.

A Monster not running into humans – well, that was par for the course, really. No, it was simply stating the obvious. But why did the corner of her heart feel like...

Kim Yu-Rin silently swam within her thoughts. Several useless and messy thoughts about the Orc and herself filled her head up.

The two of them spent what could be their last day of staying down here in unbreakable silence.



Next day. Kim Yu-Rin slowly opened her eyes, prompted by faint noise of chatter and equally faint light beams coming from above. She then heard conversations.

Realising that the rescue party had finally come, she lifted her fatigued body up from the stone bed. Her throat was parched and every muscle in her body was aching. She was about to be rescued, yet she didn't really feel all that good. No, she felt somewhat lonely and disappointed, instead.

*"I see a stone house down there!! And then, an... Orc!! Hey, someone up there, quickly pass me my sword!!"*

Seeing that something bad might happen at this rate, she pushed her body and exited the stone hut. As soon as she stepped out, she saw the Orc sitting on the stone bed, his face impassive as usual as he opened his mouth.

"You woke up?" (Sae-Jin)

"..."

This time, Kim Yu-Rin didn't say anything.

Her emotion was in a mess.

To be perfectly honest, she didn't want to part ways with him.

This emotion where she wanted to stay next to someone through thick and thin, this emotion where she would feel happy and conflicted all at the same time, she didn't expect to feel it towards the Orc... but it happened.

The time they spent together within this darkness was just long enough, and the Orc's wholehearted caring was also enough to powerfully move the weakened Kim Yu-Rin's heart.

"Me, say nothing from now on. You, speak for me when we go up." (Sae-Jin)

"...I'll leave you behind alone." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"...What?"

“You’re a monster, that’s why.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The Orc glared at Kim Yu-Rin dumbfoundedly. She didn’t avoid his eyes and squarely met them with her own. Then, she began to feel disappointed again. Why was he being so indifferent like this? Couldn’t he be just a bit nicer towards her? A certain emotion inside her suddenly welled up uncontrollably.

“To me, it won’t matter whether you’re outside or inside this hole, if you are not planning to meet me anyways...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Even while on the verge of tears, she didn’t shed a single teardrop.

“...Can’t be helped. Then, you, go up alone.” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah, seriously...?!”

Even her final triumph card didn’t work against the determined Orc.

Meanwhile, several Knights wielding swords shouted at them while being lowered by the magically-operated lift system.

“Knight Kim Yu-Rin!! Is that you, ma’am?”

“...Yes. Over here.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Although she hesitated, she still answered them in the end.

“Please, stand aside!! We will take care of the Orc and the wolf!!”

At this declaration, she shifted her gaze to the Orc, to Cornlak, and back to the descending Knights above. She stifled a sniffle and wiped the droplets of water pooling on the corners of her eyes.

And then, opened her mouth.

“No, there is no need for that. This here is... the ‘Hero’ Orc, you see.”

# Chapter 130

## Traces of a Hero

Sae-Jin the Orc beseeched Kim Yu-Rin with alerting the rest of the world about that white bird, then climbed aboard the pulley-operated platform.

“We, uh, we are going up.”

The two Knights charged with the rescue operation began operating the platform while stealing glances at the Orc. Or, more correctly, at his defensive and offensive armaments. Even a single, casual glance could tell them those were all first-rate items that easily aroused their desires, even if they didn’t want to.

The Orc wordlessly tossed pairs of wrist guards and gauntlets at them. The Knights studied each other’s expressions and then, the one carrying the spear took the wrist guards, while the dude with fists as weapons took the gauntlets.

Using his fists – one of these Knights used his hands as weapons. There was a golden emblem ‘Jin’ etched on his chest armour, so it was safe to assume this guy was one of the ‘inheritors’ of Jin Seh-Hahn’s ideals.

“...T, thank you very much.”

Both Knights expressed their gratitude after receiving these sudden gifts. And at roughly the same time, warm sunlight could be seen above their heads.

“We’ll return to the surface in around ten minutes. Please be patient for a little while longer.”

“I understand.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin faced the rescuers with an officious and dignified attitude. The Orc snorted at a just-loud-enough decibel that others might hear him. She frowned slightly after hearing his ridicule and promptly turned all of her attention towards the two Knights. It was the breakout of her jealous streak that wasn’t even a real breakout.

“By the way, it seems like you are from the Jin Mudo school?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Oh. Yes, I converted around nine months ago, although I lack in many areas.”

“But, you’re a upper Mid Tier already only nine months after the conversion – your talent must be exceptional.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Hahah... thank you for your kind words, but that isn’t the case. I simply studied and copied a handful of instructors, that’s all. And as luck would have it, this style really suited my tastes and talent level well. My Trait also helped out a great deal.”

Jin Seh-Hahn – a man who became a High Tier posthumously, acknowledged as the Highest Tier as far as his fame was concerned, and already a part of the greatest honour known to Knights, the Hall of Fame.

And now, over a hundred thousand disciples around the globe were busy pursuing the path of the martial arts Jin Seh-Hahn had gifted this world, and over a thousand among them had chosen to wield fists after putting their weapons down.

All these people fervently studied, reviewed, tempered themselves and trained hard while watching the films containing Jin Seh-Hahn’s movements. To them, Jin Seh-Hahn would remain forever their true instructor.

Because he was so generous with shooting lots of footages for educational purposes, his invaluable martial arts style, such as his battle sense, punching and movement technique, etc, could be preserved in full, becoming the guiding light for all the future generations.

In other words, the traces of a hero had been deeply engraved into the world’s psyche.

“Is that how it was? Your teacher was truly a praiseworthy man.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin nodded her head respectfully.

“.....”

The Orc silently scratched his nose. He was inwardly feeling a bit embarrassed by the fact that the existence of Jin Seh-Hahn, an identity he created in order to achieve one of his goals, was able to influence the world far more greatly than he’d ever anticipated.



Before long, the platform finally arrived at the surface. As this was a High Tier hunting ground, there weren't many onlookers and not one reporter present – with the obvious exception of thirty-odd Knights and Wizards. They all gulped nervously after seeing the Orc and his huge Wolf.

“...Are you going now?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

As soon as the Orc climbed on the back of Cornlak, Kim Yu-Rin asked in a miserable voice.

The Orc lightly nodded his head, then signaled to his ride.

*Kwahck!!*

Cornlak jumped off the platform and into the sky, disappearing from the view almost immediately.

And Kim Yu-Rin watched the back of departing Orc with a pair of lonely eyes.



As soon as he returned home, Kim Sae-Jin had to hear an earful from Yu Sae-Jung. After angrily declaring “I’m also not coming home for a whole month!!”, she promptly left the house.

That night, Sae-Jin forgot about sleeping and crafted a necklace. And on the following day, he went to where she was staying and gave it to her as a gift, accompanied with an apology. She was waiting for him at the Guild’s dormitory, and when he came, she feigned dissatisfaction but still forgave him.

“...Oh?”

Later that day, after he had successfully received her forgiveness.

Kim Sae-Jin used his notebook PC to check some stuff out about Jin Seh-Hahn online, before running into a particularly interesting website.

It was actually the website for the official Jin Mudo Martial Arts School established after Jin Seh-Hahn’s death, but what caught his eyes were the words plastered on top of the screen – [Yi Yu-Jin, 23 years old, Director].

Seeing her title description that said ‘former’ Knight of Eden, it seemed that she had left Eden after Jin Seh-Hahn’s death, and then established the official association as well as the school to carry on with his legacy.

While smiling brightly, Sae-Jin checked the site out, before remembering a certain part of the will, written for him by Kim Yu-Sohn, all of a sudden.

*“Excluding my financial assets, everything else will be handed over to my valued and trusted colleague, Yi Yu-Jin.”*

‘Ah. That clause ended up changing a person’s life, hasn’t it.’

Should he feel proud about this, or feel apologetic...? For now, Sae-Jin carefully searched through the site. Thankfully, he found a page link for ‘Sponsorship’. Thinking that he should help out a bit, Sae-Jin reached out and touched the link as it appeared on the hologram.

*\*SFX for a hologram changing\**

Yi Yu-Jin’s face projected in the air became extra large. It was actually a pre-recorded video.

*“Hello, my name is Yi Yu-Jin, the current serving director of the School of Jin Mudo.”*

A brave face, the one Sae-Jin sort of missed a little, greeted him.



“Fuu...”

At the same time.

Yi Yu-Jin spat out a really long sigh of lamentation while holding her head full of complicated thoughts.

There was a ledger full of messy swarm of numbers right in front of her. Revenues were written with a blue pen, while losses were were marked with a red one.

Nowadays, no person alive would keep the books manually like this, but since she was one of those computer illiterate members of the humanity, she had no other choice in

the matter.

“And just how do I fill up this hole in the budget...?”

However, one could only spy red letters on the pages of the ledger. It was filled with expenses for maintenance cost, management cost, as well as labour costs, rather than profit.

If she wanted to generate profit forcibly, she probably could. After all, if she hiked the fee for lessons dramatically, as well as strictly enforce the copyright claims on all of Jin Seh-Hahn’s footages, and then charge royalties on them, then she’d earn a pretty penny for sure.

If she did all these, then the public might accuse her of selling out Jin Seh-Hahn’s legacy, but there should be a steady stream of hopeful Knights who would still pay up. The martial arts Jin Seh-Hahn had created all on his own were more than good enough for that.

But, Yi Yu-Jin didn’t want to do this. She could not do it. Because, she believed that she knew the reason better than anyone why Jin Seh-Hahn had entrusted her with carrying out his legacy.

Jin Seh-Hahn used to tell her that she was a lot like him almost all the time. He also added often that she should stop using weapons and rely on her fist, instead.

Back then, she balked at the idea, saying that he was trying to ruin her career and stuff like that. But after he died, she did put her weapon down and used her fists instead – to very surprising results.

And that was... Her unique Trait, “Level Mastery”, had a shockingly great compatibility with Jin Seh-Hahn’s martial arts. And so, she used all of the footages of Jin Seh-Hahn, which now belonged to her, to rapidly advance her abilities. It only took her two months to master the martial art. Even the way Eden treated her changed after that.

But it was as if Eden had become addicted to the taste of sweet exposure that the hero Jin Seh-Hahn brought. They requested Yi Yu-Jin to become his clone and appear in front of the cameras for publicity stunts.

Disillusioned by this development, she quit Eden and all by herself, opened the Jin Mudo dojo.

There were already several classes taking place in other Knight Academies across the country, but since this was the only dojo that truly inherited his legacy, her school ended up causing quite a bit of stir. Yi Yu-Jin's reputation as one of Eden's Knights also greatly helped, too – the moment the dojo opened its doors, over 200 hopeful students rushed in to apply.

But... that was it.

The fee for lessons was unbelievably low. And the monthly wages for the instructors were unbelievably high. Within three months of opening, all the funds she had accumulated, as well as every dime she had borrowed, ran out.

But she endured every single day, hoping for donations or sponsors to come through. Jin Seh-Hahn's name was associated with this dojo, after all.

Unfortunately, both the big businesses and Knights Orders were cold hearted. They didn't want to sponsor this place. No, they instead blocked other avenues for sponsorships. And then, they 'politely' suggested her to sell the rights to all of Jin Seh-Hahn's footages.

If she sold the rights, then the lucky Knights Order or the big business would monopolise the legacy for big profit, and all the related backlash would fall squarely on Yi Yu-Jin's laps. This was the so-called 'No Risk, High Return', every merchant's wet dream come true – this point alone made corporations and Knights Orders to become uncaring trash in a heartbeat.

"Hey, Yu-Jin. You feeling okay?" (Goh Yun-Jong)

It was then, teacher-cum-employee Goh Yun-Jong asked her out of worry from her side. Yi Yu-Jin formed a fake smile and nodded her head.

"Of course. Have you ever seen me lower my head to stinking bastards like these a-holes before?" (Yi Yu-Jin)

"We've had an influx of private donations after you uploaded that video. Let's endure it for a little bit longer, okay?" (Goh Yun-Jong)

"...Right. We must endure." (Yi Yu-Jin)

*\*SFX for a weird and repeated ringing of a phone.\**

Suddenly, the phone began crying out a bizarre ringtone.

“Oi, Goh Yun-Jong! Didn’t I tell you to change that stupid ringtone many times already? Are you treating the order of the dojo master like it’s empty air or something?!” (Yi Yu-Jin)

“...Sorry. Dunno how to do it.” (Goh Yun-Jong)

Goh Yun-Jong smiled and picked the receiver up.

“Hello, this is the central dojo of the Jin Mudo Martial Arts School, and this is the vice director Goh Yun-Jong speaking.”

Leaving Goh Yun-Jong to take care of the phone, Yi Yu-Jin shifted her gaze back to the pages of the ledger...

“...Excuse me? Ah... Eh? Ah... Eh? No, hang on... Eh? Oh, so that is... Eeeh?!”

...However, Goh Yun-Jong was getting on her nerves. He sounded like he was ordering a bloody takeaway or something with all those “ehs”.

“What the hell are you doing??” (Yi Yu-Jin)

“No... Hold on for a moment, please.”

After lowering the receiver, Goh Yun-Jong stared at Yi Yu-Jin with a dumbfounded face.

“He wants to become a sponsor.” (Goh Yun-Jong)

“Oh, really? That’s a good news. I should jot it down on the ledger. How much is it?” (Yi Yu-Jin)

Yi Yu-Jin asked without thinking too much about it. Unfortunately... Goh Yun-Jong’s reply was slightly beyond her expectations.

“...\$10 million.” (Goh Yun-Jong)

“...”

Confused by what she just heard, she tilted her head a bit, before her face crumpled in

irritation. This sounded like yet another damn prank call.

“Who the hell is on the line?” (Yi Yu-Jin)

“Hold on.”

Goh Yun-Jong picked the receiver up again.

“Excuse me... may I ask where you are calling from? The name of the corporation is... Ah... Y, ye, yes? R, really? Ah, please, wait for one more moment.” (Goh Yun-Jong)

Lowering the receiver, Goh Yun-Jong stared at Yi Yu-Jin with a shocked face.

“He says he’s Kim Sae-Jin, the Guild Master of The Monster.” (Goh Yun-Jong)

“Ha-ah. Hey, Yun-Jong. How many phone calls from ‘Mister Kim Sae-in’ did we get in the last couple of months?” (Yi Yu-Jin)

“Ah... well, probably around twenty times?”

“Exactly. Just talk to the guy *nicely* and hang up the phone already.” (Yi Yu-Jin)

“R, right... Ah, excuse me. My apologies, but... I understand your intentions... We don’t have any room at the moment to entertain pranks...”

Seeing Goh Yun-Jong literally talk *nicely* on the phone, Yi Yu-Jin became frustrated and so, she snatched the phone away.

“Hello. I don’t know who you are, but stop calling us with these stupid prank calls. If you have time to waste like this, then why don’t you go to a school and study something? Seriously, with the world becoming so chaotic lately, must you do something so childish like this? I really don’t want to say something like this over the phone, but man, you’re pathetic. Pathetic, I tell ya!!” (Yi Yu-Jin)

– “..... Hahahaha...”

Yi Yu-Jin ended up rapidly firing some harsh words due to her frayed nerves, but she could only hear a leisurely laughter coming out from the phone’s speaker instead.

– “*My apologies for being pathetic, miss. By the way, even if you don’t want, please take*

*the money anyways. It's just ten million. Although I'd like to help you out more, that's all the readily available liquid cash I have on me at the moment. So, tell me your bank account number."*

"Ha-ah. You can find the account number at the website. If you want to pull a prank, then at least do some research beforehand, eh? Whatever you set out to do, you should try to do your best! Do you even get what I'm saying over here?" (Yi Yu-Jin)

*– "Oh... Is that so? Please wait for a sec."*

Yi Yu-Jin shook her head and was about to hang up the phone.

*Ttiring-*

It was then, a short alarm rang from her mobile phone and its screen lit up suddenly. She took a look at the screen out of habit, and then... froze up on the spot like a statue.

The content of the words on the screen was way too shocking to be believed.

[\$10 million has been deposited to Miss Yi Yu-Jin's account. (260483-38\*\*\*\*\*)]

"Uh....."

*Vvrrroouung...*

At the same time, exhaust notes of several cars could be heard from outside the office window.

*– "Employees of The Monster should be arriving there shortly. Please, have a chat with them about signing a more permanent sponsorship or a partnership deal."*

As soon as those words ended, Yi Yu-Jin hurriedly ran towards the window to take a look outside. There were four or five ultra-luxurious saloon cars parked on the street, and when their doors opened simultaneously, men in black suits carrying briefcases exited and began walking towards the dojo.

“.....”

Yi Yu-Jin lost all capacity to speak in that moment. Well, there was the logo of ‘TM’ oh-so clearly etched on their briefcases – the logo of The Monster.

She then recalled the things she uttered out to that man over the phone.

If that guy was indeed Kim Sae-Jin, then...

Her heart began palpitating madly as if it wanted to blow up, and her consciousness suddenly became very dim.

*Knock, knock!!*

Soon enough, the sounds of people knocking on the doors of the dojo came to her, and...

*Plop!!*

Yi Yu-Jin collapsed on the floor while showing the whites of her eyes.



– *“We are on our way to a hospital.”*

“...A hospital? But why?” (Sae-Jin)

– *“The director of the dojo collapsed seemingly due to some kind of shock, sir... It must have been psychological, as even taking a recovery potion didn’t help her.”*

“Fut.”

Kim Sae-Jin chuckled. She was unexpectedly weak-minded, it seemed.

“Okay, for now, delay the meeting until tomorrow. Since she’s sturdier than she looks, she should be fine by then.” (Sae-Jin)

– *“Yes, sir. I understand.”*

Sae-Jin ended the call. He then pulled out a brand new sheet to cover the sleeping Yu



Sae-Jung's naked body, lying over the torn and messed up bed spreads before heading downstairs to the underground basement.

The unexpected accident caused some delays to his plans, but before the situation could get worse, it was now the time to start the 'hunt' properly. There was no more time to waste.

"First, I should make an armour for the Leviathan Form..."

He produced two ingots of the greatest metal known to men, mithril. Summoned into the open before anyone had noticed it, Cornlak panted as it approached him.

"I'll make an armour for you to wear as well. Wait for it."

Soon, he'd be on his way to 'catch' *the* Bathory.

# Chapter 131

## Preparations for the Hunt (1)

“Shall I get started?”

Sae-Jin pulled out and drank a potion he made that was designed to boost a person’s mental concentration, sensitivity towards Mana, the ‘Magic Strength’ stat, as well as various other Mana-related stats for a short period of time.

He then changed into the Orc Form and activated the Smithing Technique on the mithril ingots. With a gentle *Wuong~*, mithril ingots melted into thick liquid form.

Next, he changed into the Goblin Form and began the painstaking process of crafting this composite material made out of mithril and Mana into something else.

He added various attributes suitable for an armour, and since the body of his Leviathan Form was getting larger everyday, he also didn’t forget to add one more attribute, that of elasticity, as well.

Even if the work seemed simple from a casual glance, every master craftsman carried the mindset of going all out to achieve the best result they could. Kim Sae-Jin too, gave the process all his being and focused 100% on it.

*Ttuk-*

Two hours later.

As the sweat pooling on the end of his chin fell, the crafting finally came to an end.

[A perfect defensive gear set has been created.]

[Damage Reduction, Level: A]

- The damage incurred by all forms of physical attacks will be reduced by 50%.

[Elasticity, Level: S]

- The material will not tear no matter how big the host grows. Makes the material almost the same as the host's own skin.

[External Mana Storage, Level: B+]

- 3000 units of Mana can be stored within the gear. 'Units' are based on the average amount of Mana found in a human adult. An average adult human possesses 10 units of Mana.]

[Space Distortion, Level: C]

- By consuming Mana, 'space' can be manipulated. The maximum distance applicable: 1 kilometre.

[Time Distortion, Level: F]

- By consuming a large amount of Mana, the flow of time can be manipulated. The maximum limit for manipulation: 1 second.]

The armour with many special attributes imbued with, specifically designed for the Leviathan's use – although it looked more like a piece of cloth rather than a real metallic armour, it was still an incredible thing nonetheless, as several of its features could be easily referred to as minor miracles all by themselves.

"Wow, finally, the time manipulation... Euh-ah-ah... Oh man, feel like I'm dying from this dizziness..."

While feeling very much satisfied by the end product, Sae-Jin plopped down on the cold, hard floor. The effects of the potion had run out, and he was feeling really dizzy thanks to the backlash from the forcefully increased concentration levels.

After wasting another ten minutes doing nothing but recuperating, Sae-Jin changed into the Leviathan Form in order to put on the new battle gear.

Around the 2.5 metre body, he draped the bath towel-like silvery defensive gear. As soon as this towel (?) came in contact with his scales, it clung tightly to him like another layer of skin and completely covered his body. That caused his original pure blue colour to change into the brilliant silver sheen.

He felt there was a different type of coolness coming off of him when compared to his original appearance, but he nevertheless also sensed that he had gotten stronger than before. Would there be yet another noisy fuss raised, when the world finds him like this, saying that the Azure Dragon had evolved once more?

‘...Hmm, should I add, uh, a cape too?’

...He decided not to, since, at this rate he might truly morph into an action figure for children. He did hear that dolls of the Azure Dragon were flooding the markets of late, after all.

*“Keung... Khooung... Khreung!! Kkyung...”*

While staring at the mirror, Sae-Jin the Leviathan began taking various poses – looking dignified and serious, then sulky and pouting, and even, a cute face. In the middle of this, he suddenly recalled an order he gave to Jo Hahn-Sung about a month ago, so he changed back to human, picked up the phone and called the guy.

*Tturu...*

Jo Hahn-Sung picked the phone up even before the first ring tone could end.

– *“Hello, Guild Master.”*

“Hello, Mister Hahn-Sung. Do you remember the thing I asked you to do the last time?”

– *“...Ah, aha. You mean that one? Yes sir, I do remember. I did not forget it. Not at all, sir.”*

He did sound like he had completely forgotten about it before Sae-Jin made the call, though... Sae-Jin smirked slightly and continued.

“Well, then. I called you to find out about the progress on the matter.”

– *“...Ah, the thing is... the Mana Stones of sea Monsters are very rare and are also quite expensive...”*

Mana Stones of sea-faring Monsters – meaning, Sae-Jin wanted an underling for his Leviathan Form, so he ordered Jo Hahn-Sung to locate one.

“You haven’t found one yet?”

– *“No, sir, actually... There is one that hadn’t been sold because of its exorbitant asking price, sir. It’s been priced way too much compared to what it can be used for, so not even those mad collector types have stepped up to buy it at the moment.”*

Right away, Sae-Jin stood right up from the chair. To think, a Mana Stone belonging to a Monster that was so expensive, no one was willing to buy it. His body began to ache from the excitement.

“W, what is it? The name of this Monster?”

– *“That is...”*

Jo Hahn-Sung hesitated slightly. As the CEO of TM, he was burdened with the responsibility of safely handling the financial balance of the company as a whole. However, this Mana Stone...

“Please hurry up.”

– *“Ah, well, it is... a Kraken, sir.”*

The Kraken. One could humourously call it a giant squid, but the truth was, it was an incredible creature that could easily occupy a starring role in many legendary tales of yore.

“A K, Kraken, you say?!”

Hearing those brightly-glittering name, Sae-Jin’s heart skipped a beat altogether. At

the same time, Jo Hahn-Sung's heart also missed a beat as well – what if Sae-Jin asked him to buy it?!

*“B, b, but!! The estimated price alone is around \$65 million!! On top of this, the Knights Order is asking for the amount that is nearly ten million more than that, sir!! It's just nonsensically, ridiculously expensive amount.”*

“Wow, as you say, that's some price tag, alright. But how did they catch a Kraken? Who caught it?”

*– “This Kraken used to be nicknamed ‘Amari’, previously found in the Mediterranean Sea, Master. A Rome-based Knights Order killed it while losing three of its own Knights, so it's more than likely they will not negotiate any terms whatsoever.”*

Jo Hahn-Sung swallowed nervously. No matter how densely packed the Mana Stone was with the Kraken's unique and special Mana, it was worth no more than \$40 million, when considering the potential financial applications for it. So, \$75 million plus was simply too much...

“Buy it.” (Sae-Jin)

*\*SFX for a building collapsing\**

The heart of Jo Hahn-Sung the CEO collapsed into a helpless heap. 75 million dollars would be the equivalent of one full year of combined wages for the employees...

“However, since we're dealing with a Knights Order here, we can probably exchange items with them, am I right? Tell them I will ready up to 4 armaments and artifacts with attributes they want. Oh, set some limit as well, don't allow them to ask for anything willy-nilly.”

*– “..... Aaah.”*

Fortunately, Jo Hahn-Sung had forgotten about something important. It was the fact that Kim Sae-Jin was the proverbial goose laying golden eggs – no, rather, he was the Korean silky fowl that laid mithril eggs...

At least, there was no way the negotiation with any Knights Orders, or even Wizard Towers, would fail.

– “Yes, sir. I understand. I shall send the official request right away.”

“Please. I need it quickly, so give it your all.”

After ending the call, Sae-Jin began whistling out loudly.

He thought getting a Monster like a Ness at the end of the day would be perfectly fine enough, but then, even bigger fish had entered the net, instead.

When he add the Kraken to the list of Monsters he could summon, then there would be only one slot left in his ‘heart’. But he was planning to leave that one alone for now; well, it was currently reserved for that white bird that could spew out Breath attacks.



Around the same time when Kim Sae-Jin was feeling rather chuffed with himself...

Kim Yu-Rin was staying awake throughout the night in a bout of depression.

The night was only growing taller, yet sleep didn’t want to visit her. Originally, Knights didn’t need a whole lot of sleep in the first place, but since she couldn’t catch a wink in the last two days, the situation seemed serious this time.

She felt so lethargic all the time, and didn’t feel like being alone any more as well. However, although she did feel this way, she also didn’t want to leave her house, either. Plainly speaking, she only wanted to be with one specific person.

She couldn’t understand why depression would attack her like this... No, honestly speaking, she knew. She understood the reason plenty well enough.

Her colleagues said something or rather about her mood being a post-operation trauma experienced after surgically removing the parasitic Mana, but...

“...”

She wanted to see him. The scent that wasn’t present in her home, it still lingered within her memories and stung the inside of her nose.

She wondered what would the Orc be doing right now. She already knew that he probably wasn’t thinking about her. He was most likely fighting tooth and nail, or

maybe, maintaining his mace or the armour in contemplative silence.

She then suddenly thought of 'Kim Sae-Jin'. What was his relationship with the Orc? Just what did he do that made the Orc call him as the 'most important' person? She was curious. Envious. Jealous, even.

*\*SFX for a mobile phone ringing\**

Her phone rang. But since she couldn't be bothered about anything, she just let the phone be.

For the first time in a long, long while – no, for the first time in 13 years since she entered the Knights Order, she thought that she could seriously do with a vacation, right about now.



Morning of the following day.

The Monster officially announced the partnership deal with the Jin Mudo School led by director Yi Yu-Jin. The contents of the announcement were simple enough.

The Monster honestly admired and believed in Yi Yu-Jin who had inherited the true legacy of the hero Jin Seh-Hahn. So, not ending at just a simple sponsorship, TM would continuously invest into its future as well, going as far as to purchase the surrounding land near the dojo and expand the size of the association and the school itself.

That short but no-nonsense announcement began giving birth to brand new rumours, when combined along with another announcement made by TM exactly three months ago – regarding the 'new Guild member selection'.

[The chairperson of the 'Jin Mudo School of Martial Arts' Yi Yu-Jin, entering the Monster Guild?] [Rumours related to The Monster Guild member selection, and candidates receiving attention of the public.]

The mass media folks were already naming the potential candidates and were in the



middle of raising a huge fuss. The funny thing was, the guy supposedly 'handing out the dough' didn't even know this was happening at the moment. Meanwhile, names of the Knights he hadn't even considered before were being placed on the list of 'potential candidates'.

Hell, some media companies even interviewed several Knights appearing on that dubious list.

[A potential candidate, High Tier Knight Kim Won-Jong interviewed.]

*– Right now, although we're not supposed to say this, you're acknowledged as one of the most likely candidates. So, various betting houses around the world have placed very low odds behind your name... However, what are your thoughts regarding this matter?*

*– Haha... No, it's not like that. I certainly haven't heard of anything from them. And I also happen to believe that I still lack the ability and temperament right now to become a member of the Monster Guild.*

*– In that case, even if you're asked to join, you will refuse the invitation?*

*– Uh-huh-huh. Of course not. How can I do something like that. If I indeed do receive an invitation, that means the Monster Guild has evaluated me highly. Thus, I must put in more effort to meet their expectations of me.*

This was an excerpt from the interview done with Kim Won-Jong, a High Tier Knight from the Daebaek Knights Order. Unfortunately, this man who gave such a cool and humble interview, got busted trying to bribe one of The Monster's employees.

While both within the borders of Korea and outside of it were getting oh-so noisy over the news related to The Monster...

Inside the office of the Vice President of 'Great Wisdom Corporation', inexplicable roars of anger and a bunch of expletives could be heard.

“...God damn it!! Hey, you f\*cking son of a bi\*ch, what nonsense is this sh\*t!!”

After receiving the news much later than everyone else due to spending the day in a drunken orgy, the enraged Kim Jong-Hyuk cursed out in anger and tried to destroy his own desk. *(TL: To all the readers who forgot about this minor character, he first made his appearance in the chapter 73.)*

“My sincerest apologies, sir. This event unfolded so suddenly, we couldn’t...”

“No, no, but why? Why the f\*ck did those bi\*ches suddenly do this?”

“The thing is, there is a story that Kim Sae-Jin actually called the dojo and just handed over ten million dollars, just like that...”

“What? That no good son of a bi\*ch is doing whatever the hell he likes now, huh? Who the hell does he think he is, a goddamn NPO? A f\*cking commoner, who just lucked into a sh\*tty Trait thinks his bloodline has suddenly become a nobility or something?! Argh!!”

Kim Jong-Hyuk was actually the ringleader who rallied other big businesses and Knights Orders to pressure Yi Yu-Jin.

And since those businesses and even the government tacitly agreed with his idea, this matter was something that would have been resolved, very soon.

After all, when viewed from the government’s perspective, to see the unique martial arts created solely by the born-in-Korea, raised-in-Korea hero Jin Seh-Hahn spread around the world without a proper compensation was not something to be too happy about.

“W, what should we do now, sir...?”

“What the, you dipsh\*t!! What the f\*ck can we do now when things have become like this?! Ah? Wait, didn’t this sh\*t become such a goddamn mess, because of your lack-a-f\*cking-daisical fooling around, saying it’s all going to happen soon?!”

Kim Jong-Hyuk picked up an ashtray off the desk and threw it on the floor. The more violent he got, his coagulating rage only burned hotter and hotter.

“That, that f\*cking son of a bi\*ch, I want to kill him myself, but I can’t... Argh, f\*ck this

all to hell!!”

Kim Sae-Jin – because of that bastard, Kim Jong-Hyuk even suffered the indignity of being sent to prison. Even then, Jong-Hyuk had to cool his rage and let it go after listening to his father’s advice. What choice did he have? That bastard had grown too influential to cut off his head now.

“Get the f\*ck out. Get out!! You f\*cking useless a\*shole. Get the f\*ck out of my sight!!”

“M, my apologies, sir.”

Kim Jong-Hyuk kicked his personal assistant out of his office. Even this wasn’t enough to appease his boiling anger; so, he began destroying his office, instead.

Only after turning his once-dignified office of a Vice President into an unrecognisable junkyard, he regained some of his cool and sat down on one of the surviving chairs.

“.....Ah!”

However, he suddenly remembered something. That suspicious-looking Wizard, who asked him if he was interested in ‘working together’.

Kim Jong-Hyuk did chase the guy away since he let off that unpleasant aura unique to Vampires back then, but now...

He opened the locked drawer, and then tapped on the blood-colour crystal hidden within.



During the afternoon of freedom, after Yu Sae-Jung went off to work.

Jo Hahn-Sung came to visit Kim Sae-Jin while carrying a certain Mana Stone.

“Here it is.”

“...How did this arrive after only one day?!” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin received the small treasure box that obviously held the Mana Stone inside and tilted his head in confusion. He remembered giving his order only yesterday – no, just

over 12 hours ago.

“Ah, the thing is, when you called me yesterday, it was also morning in Rome, so the Knights Order’s higher ups had arrived for work by then, Master. That’s why I could conclude the talks quickly. When I mentioned the exchange conditions, they just sent the Stone over without asking for anything, and then, they called me up afterwards. They said, ‘since the package has been sent, you can’t renege on the deal’ or something similar to that effect, sir.” (Jo Hahn-Sung)

“Haha, that’s a relief.” (Sae-Jin)

When Sae-Jin cracked open the lid of the box a little, a jet-black beam of light exploded out from the small opening.

“Oh, oh, wow.” (Sae-Jin)

He got deeply impressed by the display of the powerful aura, and hurriedly closed the lid.

As expected, inside the chest was...

There was a huge Mana Stone fitting for a Kraken inside, all wrapped in a dignified silk, while patiently waiting for its new owner, Kim Sae-Jin.

# Chapter 132

## Preparations for the Hunt (2)

Kim Sae-Jin hurriedly climbed aboard his car so that he could get to a coastline and ‘summon’ his new pet, the Kraken.

Since the East Sea would be too full with tourists and vacationers, his new destination was going to be the South Coast.

*Vruuoong~*

The top-end sports car roared out a throaty exhaust note as it scythed past Yoseon-Dong.

He spotted many robe-wearing Alchemists on every corner of the streets, making him feel the sort-of renaissance Yoseon-Dong was going through on his skin, now that this area was being commonly referred to as the Mecca of all things Alchemy.

However, when he thought about the fact that this change was only possible due to the Goblin Alchemist’s actions, he couldn’t help but feel excessively proud of himself. Sae-Jin’s shoulders danced up and down slightly as he gripped the steering wheel tighter.

He drove past Yoseon-Dong slowly while sightseeing. Then, he happened to spot a very familiar back of a certain Elf Wizard/Alchemist.

She was wearing that snow-white robe Sae-Jin had made personally, so he could spot her way too easily.

But the way she walked seemed a bit strange. She stumbled and faltered about as if she was drunk, and there was a distinct lack of energy to her steps. Sae-Jin tilted his head in confusion. From his memory, her strides were the very definition of a queen bee strutting around in pure haughtiness, so...

Sae-Jin lowered the speed of the car and sidled up next to the person he thought was Hazeline. He could spot the lower half of the face below the hood. The pair of lips were unusually dried up and cracked, but they definitely belonged to Hazeline.

A smile bloomed on Sae-Jin's lips and he winded the window all the way down.

"Miss Hazeline!!"

"Holy \*%&#!! M, mommy!?! Kkyahck!!"

His call was way too sudden. Hazeline screamed in panic and fell on the ground face first.

*Khwang!*

She squarely faceplanted into a manhole cover on the ground. Shocked, Sae-Jin quickly jumped out of the car and rushed to her side.

"Huh. Are you alright?" (Sae-Jin)

"....."

When Sae-Jin held her shoulders and helped her to stand, he got glared at by a pair of gloomy eyes peeking out from beneath the hood. And just below them, a reddish, swollen nose with two slender streams of blood drizzling down.

"Ouch. That looks like it might hurt." (Sae-Jin)

He quickly pulled out a handkerchief and wiped the blood away. She remained still, choosing to 'feel' his hands touching her face this way and that, before mumbling out in a numbed-out voice.

".....Argh, seriously. You really surprised me... Why are you screaming out the name of a person so suddenly like that?" (Hazeline)

"Oh, my bad. Really, I didn't know you might fall down like this." (Sae-Jin)

"...Heu-eup. Come on now, this is just too much..." (Hazeline)

Suddenly, tears seemed to well on the corners of her eyes. Even the sobbing whimpers leaked out every now and then, so Sae-Jin could feel the chilly stares of the passersby stabbing him in the back.

"Ah, wait!! F, for now, please get in the car. There are too many people out here who

can recognise me.” (Sae-Jin)

“No thanks. I’m going home. So, lemme go...” (Hazeline)

“In that case, let me take you home.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin shoved Hazeline into the passenger seat, then rapidly slid into the driver’s. Fortunately enough, most of the passersby were Alchemists, and they seemed to lose their interest quickly, flowing past the duo in the car like a river’s water.

“Fuu... By the way, where was your house again?” (Sae-Jin)

“.....”

Hazeline didn’t say a word, instead simply sat there with a sullen expression, swallowing the blood from her nose.

“...Would you like some tissue?” (Sae-Jin)

“...I’ll use magic so no need.” (Hazeline)

“Ah... sure.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin wanted to ask why she was still swallowing the blood, if that was the case... but the current mood didn’t allow him to utter this bit out.

“Uhm... Then, should we head off towards the Alchemy House, instead?” (Sae-Jin)

As a reply to Sae-Jin’s inquiry, Hazeline turned the topic around to a completely unrelated matter.

“Why haven’t you answered me back?” (Hazeline)

“...Excuse me?” (Sae-Jin)

“You didn’t even pick up the phone. For the whole month.” (Hazeline)

“...Ahh.”

His face turned deeply troubled in less than one second. He had no access to his phone

during his ‘imprisonment’ underground, and when he was rescued, there were over 2000 text messages from the employees regarding the administrative matters of TM, so he couldn’t even begin to check who sent what.

“I had this thing going on at the time... Really swarmed with work, I was. W, well, when you return home, please resend the message to me. I’ll make sure to reply back to you in less than five minutes, tops.” (Sae-Jin)

“...”

Hazeline glared at him dumbfoundedly.

‘Seriously, this terrible guy is... ’

...Would this terrible guy even realise that she couldn’t get a proper night’s sleep for the past month or so because of worry and anxiety?

She was in despair during that time, wondering if he had finally figured out her true feelings and decided to stay away, or maybe, even had gotten sick and tired of her.

“Didn’t Sae-Jung tell you about how busy I was?” (Sae-Jin)

“And why would she tell me such things?” (Hazeline)

Her voice was quite sharp.

“...K, keheum. Where should we go now?” (Sae-Jin)

“Where were you off to just now?” (Hazeline)

“Pardon?”

“Your destination. I mean, Sae-Jung must be at work now, and it looks like you were going somewhere alone. I will become your traveling companion.” (Hazeline)



Sae-Jin and his traveling companion arrived at a location in the South Coast where civilians were strictly prohibited from entering.



*\*SFX for waves crashing on the rocks\**

The South Coast, with her majestic rolling waves, did indeed feature a different type of charm to her when compared to the East Sea.

‘What is this feeling?’ (Sae-Jin)

However, this whole place felt weirdly familiar. Was this a case of déjà vu? It wasn’t that he felt the sense of familiarity with the sea itself – but, a certain ‘aura’ swimming along with the currents of the ocean was the cause.

“Hello? Excuse me?” (Hazeline)

As Sae-Jin stood there utterly mesmerised, staring at the distant horizon of the South Coast, a certain person standing next to him tapped on his arms.

Of course, it was Hazeline.

“What are you doing?” (Hazeline)

“...Oh. Ah... well, something feels weirdly familiar to me here.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin finally regained his senses, and then, pulled out the huge Mana Stone.

“Have you come to the South Coast before?” (Hazeline)

Hazeline asked while taking a casual glance at the Mana Stone, before shifting her gaze back to Sae-Jin’s face.

“No, I have never come here before... But, from a far away, somewhere really deep underwater... I can feel a sense of belonging.” (Sae-Jin)

Hidden within the salty aroma of the ocean, there was a faint but persistent aura. He couldn’t tell what it was – it felt familiar, comfortable, yet also somewhat discomfiting and imparted a sense of uneasiness as well. It may sounded like a contradictory description, but it was the only one he could come up with.

“Perhaps – it could very well be the side effects you mentioned before, your ego assimilating with that of the Monster’s. That sense of belonging, could it be because of the sea Monster?” (Hazeline)

“...Eh?”

Hazeline asked him with a worried face. What he was sensing right now, at least to him, did not feel like that, but since there was no other plausible explanation available right now, Sae-Jin nodded his head in a somewhat careless manner.

“Well, it could be that.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Please, be careful.”

Suddenly, worried Hazeline reached out and hugged his arm tightly. The wonderful and otherworldly pair of ‘volumes’ previously hidden by the thick robe, transmitted their softness to his arm.

“Oh, uh, I’ll be fine. For now... let me show you what I was talking about in the car.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin quickly assumed a smile and extricated his arm.

“Here we go.” (Sae-Jin)

He poured in his Mana into the half-a-football size Mana Stone. Then, the Kraken’s Stone changed into black gas and rose up like a dark dusty cloud. And with a single breath from him, the fog-like black energy flowed into his heart.

[The host has absorbed the ‘Kraken’, the titanic beast of the legendary tales!] [The Kraken has been absorbed into the Heart of the Warrior.] [The Kraken has been added to the list of Monsters that can be summoned.] [To match the host’s current Stats, the Kraken’s Stats will also be increased accordingly.] [The current combat level of the Kraken is: (Highest, impossible to measure) grade. However, as the host is currently in the human form, the combat level has been lowered to (High) grade.]

While the alert windows filled up his view, he released the Kraken into the sea.

*\*SFX for sea water exploding\**

As the water parted violently, a massive squid began rising out from beneath the surface.

The height that easily blocked out the sun; eight 'legs' that were sleek, smooth and fashionably sexy; and a pair of rather languid eyes.

Truly befitting the title of the worst nightmare of every seafarer out there, this was indeed the frightening Kraken...

"Holy cow... What, what the heck is this...?!" (Hazeline)

Two people dazedly stared at the mountain-like creature, while hidden under the immense shade its body had cast.

Hazeline was in the midst of swimming within the sea of shock, while Sae-Jin was swimming in the sea of satisfaction after realising that his new ally's combat strength was 'immeasurable'...

*Splash!!*

The Kraken suddenly slapped the surface of the sea and caused a huge fountain of water spray.

"Eu-uh!! Hey, stop that!" (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin shouted out, but the Kraken didn't stop. As a matter of fact, it rebelled even more fiercely than before.

*Splash!! Splash!! Splash!! Splash!!*

"H, hey!! I told you to stop!! Uh-phew!! Phew! *Cough!!*" (Sae-Jin)

"Phuu, Mis, ter, Sae, Jin!! Fhu-woo, fuu-woo. Argh, I can't breathe!!" (Hazeline)

It was as if the creature was deliberately targeting Hazeline – she was completely soaked from head to toe, and couldn't even keep her eyes open.

"Hey, you son of a... Fuu-hehp!!" (Sae-Jin)

"Argh!! Hey, just where are you shooting me with wate... Pheuheup!! I told you to

stop!!” (Hazeline)

When a stream of water hit Hazeline’s private area, the Kraken’s eyes began arching in a crescent shape. It was one of those smiles that made others wanted to punch the darn thing in the face.

“Mister Sae-Jin!!! This, this motherf\*cking squid! You!!” (Hazeline)

Her anguished cries resounded like a lioness’s roar.

Almost at the same time, the sea water containing the squid suddenly froze up in an instant. The Kraken panicked and tried to move its body, but seeing that the entire surface of the ocean had frozen stiff, there was no way it would be able to escape from her wrath.

“I’m going to educate you properly now... Excuse me, Mister Sae-Jin.” (Hazeline)

She glared into the Kraken’s pair of frightened eyes and murmured in a cold, cruel voice.

“I wonder, do you like cooked squid legs?”



A short but scary physical punishment later.

“How about giving it a name?” (Hazeline)

“...A name, you say?” (Sae-Jin)

Two people were conversing in front of a squid that was obediently lowering its ‘head’.

“I mean, it’s not much different from a pet, so how about ‘Sahrahng’?” *(TL: ‘Sahrahng’ means ‘love’ in Korean. Not sure what the author is trying to say here... Nope, no clue whatsoever.)*

“You wanna call that big thing ‘Sahrahng’?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes. Yours and my ‘Sahrahng’.”

“...Pardon?” (Sae-Jin)

At her sudden, confession-like declaration, Sae-Jin imperceptibly took a step back.

“Fuhut. You don’t have to be that sensitive, you know. Just call it Sahrahng. Even storms are named like this, you see? The stronger a storm is, the softer its name is, as if asking it to become gentler.” (Hazeline)

“Ah... Hmm.”

Sae-Jin deliberated for a second or two, before nodding his head in agreement.

“Well, sure. Let’s go with that.” (Sae-Jin)

“So, we’re sticking with Sahrahng? Great. Hey, Sahrahng-*ah*. Come over here. Why were you so naughty just now?” (Hazeline)

Hazeline smiled as she approached the giant squid.

Unfortunately, from the point of this squid’s view, it was like seeing the advent of an evil monster; Sahrahng began trembling in despair.



Europe.

A powerful giant demon called ‘Asmodeus’ appeared in Italy. Looking as if it walked straight out of the deepest regions of hell, the demon ceaselessly marched on while burning countless people to death and set aflame to the land around it.

On the places it swept past, only the traces of destructive hell fire remained. Even the skies were blotted out, and the sun was unable to penetrate the darkness.

“...Okay, fine, but why am I being asked to do something about that thing?” (Sae-Jin)

Because of this urgent incident, Yu Baek-Song had requested for a meeting with Sae-Jin in quite a bit of hurry.

“They are asking you to, well, convince the Azure Dragon to act on their behalf. Since the Azure Dragon is rated higher in the pecking order, it should be able to subdue the

demon pretty easily.” (Yu Baek-Song)

*Meow~*

A black cat held in her arms, or some might say imprisoned, threw a tantrum. Yu Baek-Song tried to appease it by clicking her tongues cutely.

Quietly studying this scene, Sae-Jin momentarily imagined Yu Baek-Song lying on his lap like a genuine cat.

It was terrifyingly cute...

“*Cough, cough.* But, why me convincing the Azure Dragon?” (Sae-Jin)

“Please, stop pretending already. Most people who should know, already know. That Azure Dragon website, we know you’re the one operating it.” (Yu Baek-Song)

“...Ah. Busted.”

“Obviously. That is why the President has asked me, while saying that I’m the only person who can talk you into it.” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song’s shoulders swaggered in delight.

“...What if I refuse?”

“Uh? Uhm... Oh, Italy said they will give you the japtem from the Asmodeus raid as well as 100 million Euros, though?”

“Hmm.”

Sae-Jin thought about this. Although the loot from the Asmodeus raid tempted him somewhat, now that he was only mere days away from fighting that Bathory woman, he didn’t want to leave the country if he could help it.

However... Now, he had in possession someone else he could send in his stead.

‘The Kraken.’

*MEOW!!*

It was then – the black cat struggling in her arms bit Yu Baek-Song’s finger and broke free, immediately jumping towards Sae-Jin’s direction.

“*Aigoo*~ You like me more than your owner?” (Sae-Jin)

*Nyah~~*

The cat rubbed its body against Sae-Jin, displaying a vastly higher *aegyo* compared to before.

“What the, seriously now?!” (Yu Baek-Song)

“What’s its name?” (Sae-Jin)

“...King of Siberia, Savage Black Leopold Tiger Kaiser the 2nd.”

“.....”

Sae-Jin wordlessly stroked the cat. And it repaid his attention by licking his hand.

“There, there, Blackie. I’m here.” (Sae-Jin)

“Call it by its proper name.” (Yu Baek-Song)

“.....Kaiser the 2nd.”

“Full name should be much better.” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song stealthily approached his side.

“But still, I’ve never seen it show so much *aegyo* before like this. Definitely, it’s that scent of yours...” (Yu Baek-Song)

To Yu Baek-Song, it was her first time seeing her ‘King of Siberia, Savage Black Leopold Tiger Kaiser the 2nd’ display this much *aegyo*, and so, she stared at the cat busy rubbing its face against Sae-Jin’s belly with a pair of dangerously shining eyes, as if she had found the most adorable thing in the whole world.

In the meantime, Sae-Jin carefully reached out and then, began patting Yu Baek-Song’s stiff ears and her hair, as her attention was completely stolen by the cat.

“There, there. Here, cutey, cutey...” (Sae-Jin)

The more he patted, the more actively responded her ears and her tail to his touches.

“Want to climb on top of my lap?” (Sae-Jin)

“.....Ng? Did you say something?”

“...*Cough*. No, uh, I, uh... To Italy, sending Azure Dragon instead of the Kraken... No, wait, I mean, ask them if it’s alright for me to send a Kraken instead of the Azure Dragon.”

Yu Baek-Song grasped the scruff of Kaiser, which clearly didn’t want to leave Sae-Jin’s lap, and sat back down on her seat.

“A Kraken? You can even control something like that?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Ah, well, technically, it’s not controlling... No, you could say that. It’s my servant.”



# Chapter 133

## Preparations for the Hunt (3)

On the frontlines near the west of Italy where a fierce battle against the demon, Asmodeus, raged on.

Knights Orders worked together with the regular army personnel and succeeded in drawing the giant demon towards the coast of the famed Mediterranean Sea.

“Has the reinforcement arrive yet?!”

Asmodeus was as tall as the leaning tower of Pisa, and the muscles on its body easily trumped that of an Ogre. However, the nimbleness of this creature belied its humongous physical girth and it could escape unscathed most of the joint attacks performed by countless Knights.

“Wait for a little bit longer!!”

The Rome Knights Order’s Master, Brefone shouted out desperately. The deal with Kim Sae-Jin stated that, he would dispatch a Kraken to the Mediterranean, so the Knights should cooperate with the sea Monster to kill Asmodeus. Since it was a Kraken and not an Azure Dragon, the fee they had to pony up wasn’t as much, but...

‘Just when is that damn thing arriving here?’

Just as the Rome Knights Order’s Master was about to form a big grudge in his heart against Kim Sae-Jin...

The waters of the Mediterranean Sea rippled violently.

*Kuuguuuuu...*

Thick white foams bubbled up on the ocean’s surface, and the Kraken finally rose up high from the depth, blocking out the harsh glare of the Mediterranean sun.

The entrance of the Kraken was as noisy and awesome as if a part of the ocean floor

was lifting up to the surface. And sure enough, the incredible size of the Kraken easily overwhelmed the demon, Asmodeus.

*\*SFX for a low-pitched growl\**

The Kraken glared at Asmodeus for a bit, before wrapping up the fiery demon with its long tentacles. Of course, the demon resisted and spat out hellfire all around it in an instant.

Asmodeus's hellish flames could not be weakened.

Still, 'heat' could be stolen away.

From the suction pads of the Kraken's tentacles, bitterly cold energy rushed out, and these cold winds quickly dissipated the high temperature of the demon's hellfire.

Only then did the demon fall into a state of panic, and began retreating hastily.

"D, do not miss this opening!! Attack!! Attack!!"

With this call, Knights, who had been pushed back time and time again throughout the encounter, rushed in towards Asmodeus.

"That Kraken is our reinforcement!! Attack the demon!!"



"These are the payments we received from Italy, the horns of the demon Asmodeus and its Mana Stone." (Kim Sun-Ho)

Kim Sun-Ho handed over the loot from the Boss raid. Sae-Jin checked them out while he carefully probed Sun-Ho with a question.

"So, how useful was Sahrahng out there?" (Sae-Jin)

During the battle, Sae-Jin was in the Leviathan Form in order to boost Sahrahng's – the Kraken's – Stats; as for the amount of exposure gained through the Asmodeus raid, that was still unknown as Italy was still going through the post-battle recovery phase.

"According to the Rome Knights Order – it was utter domination. They can't stop

praising the Kraken's ability to freeze the demon's fire with its ejected ink, Boss." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"...That's a relief." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin nodded his head in satisfaction. There was indeed a merit to giving the Kraken a Mana Tattoo that strengthened its innate 'water' based abilities, as well as attaching a specially-crafted weapon of sorts that could freeze anything at a lightning-quick speed to its suction pads.

"So, that is why, it may be not a bad thing to continue utilising the Kraken like this, Director Kim Yu-Sohn said... no, my father said as much, Guild Master." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"...He did?"

Hearing Kim Yu-Sohn's name out of the blue, Sae-Jin couldn't help but nod his head in a bitter, downbeat mood.

"How is he doing nowadays?" (Sae-Jin)

Currently confined to a hospital bed, the time Kim Yu-Sohn stayed unconscious was getting increasingly longer than compared to when he was awake.

Not too long ago, Sae-Jin went to see the veteran Mercenary, holding in one hand a potion he made with all his focus and effort, a medicine that had a near-miraculous elixir-like effect.

However... Kim Yu-Sohn didn't want to drink it. And Sae-Jin couldn't force the older man to drink it, either.

With both his mind and body in steep decline, Kim Yu-Sohn said that his Trait had stopped working now. Judging from the bright smile etched on his lips, Sae-Jin thought that he looked happy with not one ounce of regret. His dreamscape was now freed from the torturous visions of the incoming future, and it seemed that he was finally given the chance to dive into the memories of his happier past...

"...Doctors said dad has around three months left." (Kim Sun-Ho)

Kim Sun-Ho clenched his fist tightly as he spoke. His voice was trembling.

Feeling the tip of his nose sting with sad emotions, Sae-Jin let off a fake cough and tried to change the subject.

“Keum. I understand. Oh, by the way – what’s happening with the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong currently?” (Sae-Jin)

The overwhelming, unparalleled genius who had corrected 23 grimoires in less than a year – the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong fell like a meteor into the stale world of Wizards and magic, becoming its hottest celebrity in no time.

The funny thing was, grimoires ‘fixed’ by the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong was priced around \$500K, which was considered really cheap – but, the number of corrected grimoires published was quite low; only 100 were printed and were sold, so when one grimoire did come out, books were sold out in the blink of an eye and led to chronic shortage of stocks.

The impassioned requests from the Wizard Towers to reprint more stock went unheard and unanswered, and in the end, they had to bet their very livelihood on getting there first when a new grimoire was about to surface.

It would’ve been better if these guys learned to share, but unfortunately, Wizard Towers, small minded and closed off from the outside scrutiny, ruled by jealousy and pettiness, would never do something like that.

And so, time had flowed steadily by and the number of corrected grimoires published by the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong now reached 23.

Thanks to the peculiar arrangement described above, not one Wizard Tower around the world possessed every single edition of these valuable books in their collections.

If they happened to have the 1st book from the series within their ‘Wizard of Bangbae-Dong’s grimoires collection’, then they wouldn’t have the second or the third book, and if they had the fourth, then they would be missing fifth and the sixth. It was like those annoying missing pieces of puzzle, really.

“Hahah... Thanks to ‘him’, the stock of our Guild has increased by another notch, Boss. They are saying, ‘The Monster Guild’s members-only library has all the volumes of the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong’s grimoires, something no other Wizard Tower has’.”

Kim Sun-Ho pulled his phone out and showed off the current situation to Sae-Jin

personally.

[(Breaking News) The Wizard of Bangbae-Dong's corrected grimoire number 24, scheduled to go on sale during sometime in August. Wizard Towers understood to be in a fierce competition already.]

*– Holy moly. How can anyone write a grimoire this quickly? He must be a real super genius.*

*– You will find more Wizards in Bangbae-Dong thanks to the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong. ⇨ ⇨. My uncle-in-law who runs a pub there is loving it. He says they spend money like there's no tomorrow.*

*– BTW, because all the grimoires are written in Korean, Wizards are tripping over each other to learn the language. The reason for all those language cram schools popping up in Bangbae-Dong is because of all the foreign Wizards found there. ⇨ ⇨ ⇨. One of my friends is an instructor. Says that the foreign Wizards list reading the original versions in Korean as their reason for applying. ⇨ ⇨.*

Sae-Jin chuckled as he read the comments, before handing the phone back.

“I guess it's par for the course, really. This Wizard of Bangbae-Dong has done the same work other Wizards might take ten years to do in less than one.” (Kim Sun-Ho)

“Haha... Is that so? Oh, right. Mister Sun-Ho, there is this thing... Ah, never mind, don't worry about it. Well, shall we end the meeting here? I should return to my other work right about now.” (Sae-Jin)

The plans to get rid of the Bathory woman was, for now, a secret even from Kim Sun-Ho.

“Yes, boss. Understood. See you later.”

Kim Sun-Ho didn't think about it too much and vacated his seat.

As soon as he left, Sae-Jin headed off towards the underground private training facility with the loot from the Asmodeus raid.



After absorbing the Mana Stone of Asmodeus, Sae-Jin was able to gain one more Skill.

[Hellish Flames of Retribution] [Skill Proficiency Level: D]

– Damage from fire-based attacks will be negated, and when performing attacks based on fire, ‘Flames of Retribution’ will be added. These flames will not go out unless the caster wills it.

It sure was a wonderful Skill, indeed – since, he could now use flame-based Breath attacks whether he was in the Leviathan Form or in the human’s appearance. And not only that, his flames would be upgraded to ‘Flames of Retribution’, even.

Hell, even the name “Breath: the Flames of Retribution” sounded really, utterly domineering, didn’t it?

As for the demon’s horns, Sae-Jin grinded it down to make potions. This potion would enter not only the heart and the muscles, but even Mana flowing in one’s body and increase the overall power of its drinker by two times or more.

“With this much...”

Sae-Jin felt this should be enough preparation for the upcoming hunt, so he pulled out the communication crystal connected directly to the Nosferatus.

“...Can you hear me?”

There was a moment of static, before he could hear Lillia’s voice coming from the crystal.

– “Yes, I can hear you.”

“I’m more or less done with my preparations. What about your side?”

– “...”

There was a gap of silence.

– *“We are also ready, but... I must express my concern in regards to the way this matter being rushed a great deal. I must reiterate that our target, the leader of the Bathory House, is not someone you can think lightly of. No, you could become one of her victims, instead.”*

“However, we do have the scale of an adult Leviathan, don’t we?”

The fully-grown Leviathan, the Monster of the sea that could give a real dragon a run for its money.

If Sae-Jin in his Leviathan Form could eat that scale, then he’d be able to ‘understand’ Mana and all its majestic glory contained within, and use that to evolve rapidly. Then, someone like that Bathory woman wouldn’t even be a threat any more.

– *“If this is your wish... We understand. We will deploy our agents and try to lead our target towards the East Sea when there aren’t that many people there – during the December period.”*

“Isn’t that too far away?”

– *“Not at all. We need to set up an isolation barrier as well as other preparations there in the meantime.”*

“Hmm. Okay, then. Got it.”

As Sae-Jin was about to end the communication, he heard Lillia’s voice continuing on from the crystal.

– *“Oh, before you go, is it possible to hire a Wizard with excellent abilities as a backup?”*

“...A Wizard? Why?”

– *“We will be needing a Wizard that you can trust.”*

“...”

Sae-Jin thought about this for a second, before recalling a certain woman that fitted the description ‘a trustworthy and skilled Wizard’ rather perfectly, and nodded his head.



A week later, within The Monster’s Guild HQ building.

Inside the members-only library, Hazeline was busy poring through the pages of grimoires ‘authored’ by the famed Wizard of Bangbae-Dong.

“Ohh. So, moving it over here makes it easier...”

Finally understanding why other Wizards were singing ‘Bangbae-Dong, Bangbae-Dong’ all the time, Hazeline’s lips formed a ‘O’ shape, showing how impressed she was.

And so, while completely oblivious to the fact of Sae-Jin being the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong, Hazeline let out her exclamation of admiration at the grimoires’ user friendliness and improvements that could be felt almost immediately. But then...

“Unni? What are you doing here?”

“...!!”

Before she had the chance to react, Yu Sae-Jung approached her. Yu Sae-Jung took a glance at the front cover and her eyes went extra round.

“The Wizard of Bangbae-Dong... Is this the grimoire published by that famous Wizard?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Uh? Oh, uh... Yes, it is. I already know all these spells, but since I heard that they were corrected for better efficiency, so...” (Hazeline)

Hazeline stealthily closed the grimoire. She felt oddly embarrassed all of a sudden – well, she was someone who had left the world of Wizardry and magic a long time ago, yet here she was, busy studying the works of a junior who had only made his “official” debut less than a year ago.



“But why a sudden interest in grimoires?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

The instincts of woman possessed by Yu Sae-Jung floated a question mark. She even took a seat next to Hazeline.

“Well, I, uh, I was a Wizard before, you know?” (Hazeline)

Hazeline became extremely awkward, and felt apologetic too, while facing Yu Sae-Jung. The emotions she had for Sae-Jin might be love from her perspective, but from Yu Sae-Jung’s point of view, it could only be seen as malicious emotions instead.

“Hmm... Isn’t this grimoire suppose to be very rare?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Y, yeah. I suppose it is? I got curious, you see? Whenever this Wizard publishes something, it goes out of stock almost immediately, right? So, how could our Guild...” (Hazeline)

“...Well, this is within my Oppa’s abilities, of course~~.”

Yu Sae-Jung spoke with an obviously pleased smile on her face. Meanwhile, Hazeline tasted a somewhat bitter-than-bitter aftertaste while nodding her head powerlessly.

“Well then, I should start studying, too...” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Slightly lost within the sense of victory, Yu Sae-Jung didn’t leave Hazeline’s side. Instead, she pulled out her notebook PC, several textbooks, and even donned a pair of very intellectual-looking glasses.

*\*SFX for doors suddenly opening\**

Suddenly, the doors to the library were pushed open very hard.

“Argh, what the?!”

Yu Sae-Jung hurriedly took off her glasses and turned her head around to look. At the same time, a huge shouting exploded out like a clap of thunder.

“My name is Yi Yu-Jin, a new member of the Guilddddddd!!!”

“\*&%#!! What the?! Who the heck is she?” (Hazeline)

Hazeline blocked her ears and frowned deeply.

“That girl... Ah, right. We did pick her as the new member of the Guild...” (Yu Sae-Jung)

The Guild held a ‘new members selection’ which ended up causing much consternation in the country not too long ago. It was such a hot topic of news that, The Monster and around 13 Knights Orders even held a joint contest among the populace to vote for who could be a good fit for The Monster Guild.

“Yi Yu-Jin... Ahh, so she got selected.” (Hazeline)

Although an official announcement hadn’t been made yet, Sae-Jin did inform them of the selection already.

Yu Sae-Jung got up from her chair and walked towards Yu Yu-Jin.

“Congratulations.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Ahh, yes!!! Thank you very much!!!” (Yi Yu-Jin)

“Let’s get along well together, you and I.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

...And behind Yi Yu-Jin, Sae-Jin was walking in through the door as well. His body trembled imperceptibly when he spotted Yu Sae-Jung just now.

“Uh, Oppa? Whatcha doing here?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“...Oh, uh, I was...” (Sae-Jin)

...He came here to discuss some very serious matters with Hazeline, actually. He told her over the phone, “Help me”, but hadn’t told her all the details yet.

“...Here to introduce Yi Yu-Jin to you all.” (Sae-Jin)

But since he didn’t expect to spot Yu Sae-Jung to be with her, he hastily used Yi Yu-Jin as a suitable excuse.

“Well then, you should break the ice among yourselves.” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah, Oppa, wait.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“...What? Why?” (Sae-Jin)

When Sae-Jin tilted his head, Yu Sae-Jung walked closer right up to his face.

She stood on the tip of her toes, wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him full on the lips. And it wasn't just a little peck, either. It was so intimate that Yi Yu-Jin, who was standing next to them and witnessing the tongue-wrangling going on in its full glory, couldn't help but have her face dyed in crimson red.

“...What was that all about, out of the blue?” (Sae-Jin)

The kiss ended after one full minute and Sae-Jin awkwardly asked.

“Just. I wanted to do it, is all.”

Yu Sae-Jung giggled and tapped on his shoulder. He scratched his cheek and left the library.

Meanwhile, all Hazeline could do was to bite down hard on her teeth while staring at that torturous sight.

“.....”

She was so envious. Her heart ached, too – as if a blunt knife stabbed it and was twisting this way and that.

On top of that, she even unconsciously imagined something she shouldn't have – Sae-Jin and her kissing. If it was her instead of Yu Sae-Jung, then she wouldn't have to stand on tiptoes, either...

She held her fountain pen real tightly, until it was this close from breaking into pieces. She even felt hints of tears welling up... So, so jealous, envious, and the mere fact that she couldn't say anything made it doubly more difficult...

“Hm, hmm~~.”

Yu Sae-Jung hummed as she sat back down next to Hazeline.

Hazeline did her very best to hold everything back in and concentrated on the grimoire. Meanwhile, Yu Sae-Jung took a sneaky and quick glance at her, and a hint of

smile formed on her lips.

# Chapter 134

## Preparations for the Hunt (4)

‘Breath’.

A type of ‘magic’ where Mana in its most elementary form was fired out.

The mighty dragons apparently loved using it in the distant past, and thus this attack became a romantic ideal of sorts, but still, the level of destructive power each Breath attack possessed was definitely horrifying to behold.

Sae-Jin came to the Monster field to train his own Breath that would no doubt become one of his main attacks whether he was in the human’s appearance or as a Leviathan – all the while suddenly choosing to wear a robe usually worn by other Wizards while carrying a single elegant wooden stick thingy and accompanied by a drone fitted with a camera.

It was shaped like a lengthy, slick pole, and the tip was rounded off – indeed, this was a magic staff crafted with Kim Sae-Jin’s own hands. From afar, it kinda looked as if he made it out from a broken branch of a tree, but when inspected close by, there was this ‘vintage’ charm to its overall shape.

On top of this, Sae-Jin also attached a ruby-like jewel on it that featured the attributes of ‘Mana Amplification’ and ‘increase spell’s power’ – in terms of market value, this staff would easily cost nearly \$30 million. Well, Wizards tended to have a rather large spending habit, so...

“...Mm.”

He was making his way towards the upper Mid Tier hunting grounds, dressed up as... the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong. He even checked to make sure the drone was working fine, since the footage captured would be uploaded to the blog, too.

He deliberately came here during the sunset, and sure enough, there weren’t all that many people around who were still out hunting. Still, Sae-Jin covered his face even more with the thick hood and roamed around the hunting ground.

*Kkkkiiiiieeck-!!*

When he walked around for 30 minutes or so, he finally ran into a fairly substantial Monster that dominated the skies, the Wyvern. If he found something like a Griffin, fine, but a Wyvern, a High Tier Monster, in the upper Mid Tier hunting ground? It was probably a typical example of how chaotic the activities of Monsters had become lately.

“Well, this is good.”

Sae-Jin pointed the staff at the Wyvern and focused his Mana flowing inside the body onto his new baby. Reddish Mana focused on the ruby, and this crimson flow gradually morphed into flames while boiling hotly, and then...

*KWAHAHAHAHAAA!!!*

...It twisted and distorted as it pounced upon the airborne Wyvern.

The Breath: Hell's Flame of Retribution fired by Sae-Jin on the ground only needed less than one second to reach the Wyvern.

*Kkiiiiieeck...*

The flames of hell engulfed the poor Wyvern in one go. The creature let out a tragic scream of suffering as it flapped its wings.

Too bad, the devilish flames didn't want to go out, no matter what.

*Wuuuooong—*

Sae-Jin gathered Mana around his staff again. This time, rather than red colour, the flow of Mana emitted a pure white hue, like the surface of ice.

The chilling Mana pooling around the staff rapidly froze the world. The molecules of air froze into tiny frost particles and scattered away, settling on the surface of his robe as a thin layer of ice.

*\*SFX for solid ice blocks cracking open\**

As the land Sae-Jin stood on froze up in white, a Breath of freezing storm rushed out from the staff this time around.



This cold Breath even managed to freeze the sky as it reached the hapless Wyvern. And when it was combined with the hell's flames, they caused a massive explosion.

*KWAHAHANG!!!*

The big and powerful Wyvern was reduced to ashes and bits of frost from the combined might of flames and bitter chill, and the remains drifted down to the ground.

“...Ho-oh.”

As its body had been completely annihilated, there was no loot to recover, but still, this show of power had truly impressed him. Even with the human form it was this amazing, so how powerful would it be in the Leviathan's Form? His confidence was soaring higher.

“I wonder how good was the footage...”

He turned his attention towards the hovering drone and muttered to himself.

“What types of reactions would they show...?”

Nowadays, Sae-Jin was deriving much pleasure at watching the surprised faces of those overly proud Wizards, as well as at those two faced people who publicly tried to cut down the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong out of jealousy but inwardly coveted what he possessed.

What would their reactions be like, after he uploads this video on the blog?

Would they deny the truth right in front of their eyes and claim that it was the might of the staff? Or would they accept the gap in their abilities and his, and kneel down in defeat? Of course, judging from the prior haughty actions of many Wizards so far, most of them would choose the former option.

“...Mm?”

While he stood there feeling rather pleased with himself, a text message from Hazeline arrived.

[Sae-Jung just left. We can talk now.]

Sae-Jin sent back his own short reply and headed back to the exit.



After meeting up with Hazeline, Sae-Jin told her everything in detail.

The horrifying future that Kim Yu-Sohn's visions revealed; as well as cooperating with an offshoot of Vampires called Nosferatus in order to stop that future from happening.

This information was a sensitive top secret that should never be told to anyone, but the person hearing it was Hazeline, and Sae-Jin felt less of a pressure precisely because of that.

That was how trustworthy and reliable a person she was.

“.....”

After hearing all of this, Hazeline's eyes opened up extra round and all she could do was to open and close her mouth repeatedly like a goldfish, completely speechless.

Actually, she couldn't say anything. From her point of view, what Sae-Jin told her just now sounded like a surrealistic fantasy.

“...Would you like to help me?” (Sae-Jin)

“...Eh? W, wait... Hold on. S, so, if I try to unpack everything Mister Sae-Jin has told me...” (Hazeline)

Hazeline swept her wet hair back, seemingly soaked through because of all the cold sweat pouring out of her forehead.

“In the future, our world will head towards apocalypse, because of the Vampires... and in order to stop these Vampires, we need to ally ourselves with other Vampires and kill their leader... Am I right?” (Hazeline)

“Hmm... More or less. But, please, do try to separate Nosferatus and Vampires apart during our conversations. It might get confusing.” (Sae-Jin)



Of course, Sae-Jin still found this group of Nosferatus not that easy to fully trust. But, he couldn't forget the fact that they handed a Leviathan's scale over to him. By taking into consideration this scale being the real deal, somehow, they didn't seem like totally evil beings that were impossible to work with.

That Lillia woman even allowed Sae-Jin to dispatch his agents to the hidden sanctuary while saying, "If we show even an inkling of betrayal, you can wipe us all out with your strengthened Leviathan Form after ingesting the scale."

"S, so, these Nosferatus..." (Hazeline)

To Hazeline, who was unaware of these events, all Vampires were exactly the same, regardless of what they were called.

"Us Elves are enemies with Vampires, you know..." (Hazeline)

She looked somewhat in agony as she covered her face.

The Mafia, the Triads, the Yakuza, rebels and revolutionaries, government forces, etc, etc... She might have received lots of 'commissions' from many different clients in the past, but an operation of this scale, and working together with Vampires no less, was a first even for her.

"...If you don't feel up to it, you can always decline. But, you must keep everything you've heard today as a secret," said Sae-Jin.

Suddenly, Hazeline lowered the hands covering her face, rested her chin on one, and with a strange look in her eyes, stared at Sae-Jin.

"...As a secret?" (Hazeline)

"Yes, of course. With the exception of you, Miss Hazeline, there isn't anyone else I can talk to about this. You're the first person to hear this secret among all my acquaintances."

Although the famous Elven trait of never betraying other's trust played a part in his decision, Sae-Jin also implicitly believed in Hazeline as well. Even if he didn't use the Eyes of the Wolf and see into her heart, she was still a person he knew the longest after all.

“...Even Sae-Jung doesn't know?” (Hazeline)

“Eh? Oh... Yes. T, that's right.”

Before he could answer, though, he did become a bit conscious of this decision. The reason why he didn't tell Yu Sae-Jung was because this operation was going to be very dangerous. Depending on how it was interpreted, it could be seen as a sort of discrimination.

“Is that so...?” (Hazeline)

But it was a weird thing – her eyes regained her calm demeanor, her lips arched in a slight grin, and even her nostrils flared just a little. Her complexion puzzlingly showed how pleased she was.

Sae-Jin scratched his head while asking her.

“Have you come to a decision?” (Sae-Jin)

“...By the way, if I decide to participate, then doesn't that mean we will have to see each other more often from now on~? You did say we need to come up with a plan.” (Hazeline)

While twisting the ends of her hair, Hazeline feigned disinterest as she asked on the sly.

“Yes, probably we will. But, if you want, we could communicate using those communication crystals...” (Sae-Jin)

“Nope. If I do this, then I should do it properly. In this world, I hate doing things in half measures the most, you know.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline suddenly stood up from her seat with a serious face.

“I will do it. Not only are you the one asking me, I also want to do something this big and crazy, too. Saving the world – doesn't that sound just cool? Being born as an Elf woman, I should do at least something this grand once before I die.” (Hazeline)

“...”

Sae-Jin gazed at her and formed a smile.

“Thank you.” (Sae-Jin)

Then, he pulled out a crystal from the drawer.

“Lillia? The Wizard agreed to do it.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Huh? We, we are doing this right now?” (Hazeline)

“Please take a seat. We’ll explain the plan.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Sure.”

As soon as Hazeline sat back down, Lillia’s voice came out from the crystal.

– *“Thank you very much, Wizard-nim. We have all climbed aboard a ship that will cross a very dangerous sea. And the first obstacle we must cross is, to kill a certain woman who will become the future ruler of all Vampires.”*

“Okay, I know that... Mister Sae-Jin has explained to me in detail already.”

– *“That is a relief. Then, allow me to explain the plan in greater detail.”*

The plan was thus:

Firstly, Nosferatus would set up an isolation barrier that separated a small area of the East Sea from the rest of the world; then inside it, they would ready countless magic traps and Mana Stones.

And when Sae-Jin played his part well and lure Bathory into this barrier, those traps would activate – then, Hazeline’s turn would come next.

What she needed to activate was the artificial heart Sae-Jin got from defeating the doll of the Vampires some time ago.

By activating the spell contained within the heart, the one that disabled the flow of Mana temporarily, and using it against Bathory, then in that moment, she should become incredibly weak. Pour countless magic attacks on her and with them, kill her.

In theory, it would only take a blink from the beginning of the operation to its conclusion – probably less than three seconds. However, Lillia was of an opinion that, if they failed to kill the Bathory woman within that time frame, the odds of their plan failing was over 70%, so she added something else.

– *“It is regrettable that most of us, Nosferatus, are Wizards... I feel that it could be to our advantage if we have one more person, a Knight, that can delay Bathory physically.”*

Lillia began mumbling as she found it unfortunate.

“A Knight, you say?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin’s eyes brightened. If they were talking about a Knight... then he could think of someone. Someone who went on a vacation during these Monster incident-laden turbulent times, saying that she couldn’t work due to the post-op depression from the operation – Kim Yu-Rin.

– *“Yes. Even with a lot of people, a disorganised rabble will only end up getting in our way – so, I believe a talented Knight would be better for us.”*

“.....Hmm.”

Sae-Jin fell into a dilemma.

Meanwhile, Hazeline was next to him, unable to compose herself.

He definitely said he wouldn’t get Yu Sae-Jung involved in this. That meant, the most powerful person of the remaining Knights could only be...

At his follow-up words, Hazeline’s heart sank to the bottom.

“I could float the idea past the Knight Kim Yu-Rin.” (Sae-Jin)

The relationship between human Sae-Jin and Kim Yu-Rin wasn’t all that deep, unless he was in the Hero Orc Form.

However, she was someone with a great sense of righteousness as well as holding unshakeable ideals of a Knight. If he explained to her that, by killing Bathory, they would put an end to the Monster incidents, she might agree to do it without much resistance with that line of persuasion...

It was then, Hazeline grabbed the arm of deliberating Sae-Jin.

“...Excuse me, Mister Sae-Jin?” (Hazeline)

“Yes?”

She could only contort her body with a uncomfortable face, unable to say a single word.

Not only did she feel ashamed of the past incident with Kim Yu-Rin, but also, she didn't want to discuss her past love life in front of Kim Sae-Jin, either.

“What's the matter? Are you perhaps uncomfortable with Miss Kim Yu-Rin?” (Sae-Jin)

*Nod, nod.*

“Well, in that case... there is someone else who isn't a Knight, but probably stronger than regular Knight anyway – will that be fine?” (Sae-Jin)

– *“Yes. What we are looking for is a person who can physically delay Bathory, even for a brief second.”*

In gaming terms – what they were looking for was a tanker. While grinning to himself, Sae-Jin recalled the silhouette of someone who'd never be taken to be a tanker – a small white cat, Yu Baek-Song.

“What about Knight Joo Ji-Hyuk? I hear he got promoted to the High Tier.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline asked him cautiously.

“Oh... You're right. We also have Mister Ji-Hyuk, don't we?”

– *If you're talking about 'Joo Ji-Hyuk', do you mean the Master of Greatswords?*

“Yes, that's him.” (Sae-Jin)

– *“He should be a good fit, in that case.”*

Satisfied by the amazing quality of his personal connections, Sae-Jin smiled and wrote down several names on the memo pad. Of course, it was unknown whether any one of

these people might participate in something this dangerous.

“Whew-woo...”

Leaving Hazeline to breathe a sigh of relief, Sae-Jin was about to make a call to Joo Ji-Hyuk on the phone.

“Ah, right, there’s something I should do first. Nearly forgot about it.”

Then, he suddenly remembered something, and pulled out a magic staff stored in his body via Spiritualisation.

This staff looked a bit similar to his own, but it was refined and beautified further to better suit Hazeline. He also went with a diamond instead of a ruby for the decorative jewel, even.

“Here, take this.” (Sae-Jin)

“...What... is this?”

“It’s a present. For deciding to work with us. It’s got a really powerful amplification attribute added in.” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah... But, it looks so expensive...” (Hazeline)

She dazedly studied this beautiful staff for a while, before swallowing down her nervous saliva and gently embraced it.

“Haha... Get friendly with that fella soon. Since it’s one of the best I’ve made yet, it’ll listen to you very well.” (Sae-Jin)

Hazeline found Sae-Jin busy emphasizing ‘his best’ quite attractive, and she felt this powerful urge to hug him right this moment.

“Huh...?”

No, she ended up doing it for real.

Her body acted before her mind could.

She embraced Sae-Jin tightly, while slowly whispering to him.

“...Thank you.”

# Chapter 135

## The Wintering (1)

“...Miss Hazeline?”

Sae-Jin's voice slowly settled down in the office where there were only two people present.

But, Hazeline didn't release her embrace. Instead, she proceeded to rub her face all over his chest, and fully savoured this sudden bout of happiness her impulsive actions had brought along.

“...”

Sae-Jin blankly stared Hazeline as she hugged him. Her faintly trembling shoulders seemed to indicate her fears of the consequences, yet the strength of her two arms squeezing his waist said otherwise.

– *“Is there something the matter?”*

Lillia's voice came out of the communication crystal, right then. Judging from the way the tone of her words climbing up towards the end, it seemed that she was tilting her head on the other side of the line.

– *“Uhm... Ah, what was today's date again... I, well, I should get going.”*

Lillia said some weird stuff before ending the communication. Today was Saturday, but still, did she have something to do?

Sae-Jin did his best to think of inane and unrelated things in order to calm down both his shocked mind and the body. But that much-needed calmness continued to evade him, so he even took several deep breaths.

“Fuu-woo...”

In all honesty, it wasn't as if he hadn't foreseen just what kind of feelings she had for



him. The reality was... he just didn't want to think about it too deeply.

It sure was a cowardly way of dealing with the matter, but he couldn't help it. Even though they could not be in a romantic relationship, she was still a very precious person to him. So, no matter what, he didn't want to lose her. In the end, he maintained his denial that her feelings towards him were not that serious, that it was just an intense form of friendship, instead.

But didn't someone say this before? That there could never be a simple, platonic 'friendship' between men and women?

"Miss Hazeline?"

Sae-Jin called out her name again. But she didn't want to listen to him.

"...Miss Hazeline."

When his voice hardened ever so slightly, Hazeline's shoulders shook visibly. Only then, she released the hug and hung her head. Then, while sniffing a reddened nose, she spoke with a trembling voice.

"...I'm sorry. I acted without thinking, because I loved this staff so much... I'm so grateful... Something inside me just wanted to burst out so suddenly, you know? I couldn't hold it back... You know already, yes? That Elves are like this. That was why I..."

She blamed the innate personality of her race for her impulsive actions.

And while seeing her like this, Sae-Jin gritted his teeth.

Hazeline was an important person to him, someone he cherished greatly. No matter how selfish he sounded, he didn't want to lose her.

And so... he had to undo the hardened expression, and had to forcibly squeeze out a smile. He needed to pretend that he wasn't any wiser and talk to her. He knew that he was truly a rotten son of a bi\*ch, but in this very moment, this was the only thing he could do or say to her.

".....Ha, haha. You like this staff... that much?" (Sae-Jin)

With a calm voice, he gently placed the staff back in the hands of Hazeline who didn't seem to know what to do next.

"It's... a really expensive and a great staff, so please don't lose it." (Sae-Jin)

"..."

Hearing his words, Hazeline bit her lower lip and her grip on the staff tightened as if she was trying to crush it.

She could faintly tell the hidden meanings of his words. She could understand. But she hated it. She didn't want to acknowledge it, either.

That's why she didn't answer him, but instead, continued to stare at the floor while thinking about the future at the same time.

Looking at him from afar, or to stay right by his side?

Under the condition of 'Can't have him', which of the two options would prove to be more torturous?

A puzzle seemingly impossible to decipher. If both propositions were placed on a scale, they would most likely maintain equilibrium for all eternity.

But, right now, she had to give her answer to him. And... being born as an Elf, perhaps this was an unavoidable inevitability for her.

To hold a conversation with him in the same room, and at minimum, still get to see him... She wasn't sure if these were enough to satisfy herself, but still... it would be better than looking at him from afar. Looking at him only... Now that would be the worst form of torture to endure.

That was why, she had to forcibly squeeze out something past her totally blocked up throat.

".....Yes. Of course. I'll... never lose it." (Hazeline)

Unexpectedly, her desperately squeezed-out voice didn't shake. But Hazeline didn't raise her head. Although she did want to look into his eyes, she also didn't want to show her tearful expression as she was still fighting hard to hold back her tears.

And Sae-Jin gently grasped her hands, as gently and considerate as possible.

“Thank you.” (Sae-Jin)

Hazeline nearly burst out into tears, then.

*Yes. Let's be satisfied with only this. Take it as a punishment, and be happy with the fact that I can stay by his side. Be grateful rather than greedy. Be satisfied rather than sad. Let me not repeat the mistake of the past by becoming too greedy...* (Hazeline)

“No, not at all.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline wiped the corners of her eyes and raised her head. Although her reddened eyes and nose must've looked pretty pathetic, she still smiled.

“Instead... I should be the one thanking you.” (Hazeline)



After Sae-Jin managed to pacify Hazeline and sent her home, he returned to his own place late at night. Yu Sae-Jung was already asleep, while holding a long pillow that must've been a substitute for him. It was a sight adorable enough to bring a grin to his tired face.

Sae-Jin sat on the corner of the bed and gently stroked her hair. He sat there and did this for the next five minutes, before leaving a light kiss on her forehead and he got back up.

The next destination he headed to was a small desk in the corner of the bedroom.

As soon as he sat down, he pulled out his diary from the drawer.

Writing a diary was a habit he formed a long while ago. He didn't write on it everyday, but he made sure to write on it at least once or twice a week – so he could potentially stop his humanity from disappearing, buried away by the instincts of the Monsters within him.

He remembered starting this habit the day after he lost his self control and murdered that Vampire a couple of years ago. Of course, he applied a special magic treatment on the diary so no one else could read it by accident.

“Fuu-woo.”

He picked up the pen, and began committing each and every letter on the page as if he was spitting out a long sigh.

It hadn't been long, before the sound of rustling came from the bed. Sae-Jin quickly finished writing on the diary and put it back inside the drawer.

“...Oppa, you were writing on the diary again?”

Hearing the sleepy voice, Sae-Jin turned around to look, and saw Yu Sae-Jung with her messy bed hair gazing at him with half-closed eyes.

“Yeah. But I'm done now.”

He smiled thinly, and slowly approached her side. Her still-sleepy eyes followed him in a daze. He then lightly grasped the back of her neck and gave a light kiss. But soon enough, she placed her hands against his chest and pushed hard, stopping him. When he tilted his head in confusion, she abashedly murmured her reasons out in the open.

“I've got bad breaths... I just woke up now, you idiot.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“...Fut. You know I'm fine with that.” (Sae-Jin)

“But I'm not fine with it, though.”

She cutely glared at him and blew into her palm, then smelled the resulting odour. It must not have been that bad, since she let out a sigh of relief.

“Argh, you are so damn adorable!”

This really was the unendurable cuteness. That was why Sae-Jin jumped right into her arms.

“Wait!! I told you I just woke up... Ah, ahat!! That tickles, tickles~~!!”

She initially put some resistance, but she couldn't win against his mischievous and wicked ways that concentrated on conquering all her erogenous zones.

Her silk pyjamas powerlessly got ripped off, and as it turned out, she wasn't wearing

any under garments.

That night, Sae-Jin gave it his all.

And on the following day, Yu Sae-Jung had to ask for a temporary leave of absence from work.



[The Wizard of Bangbae-Dong has uploaded the new magic he has developed, 'Breath', to his blog. Possessing the unprecedented attack power that can kill a Wyvern in two hits, the world of magic has experienced yet another great shock to the system. The world's top ranked Wizard Tower, 'La Grande' of the USA, questioned whether this spell was actually a hybrid of other existing spells or not...]

As usual, as soon as Sae-Jin uploaded the drone footage to his blog, all hell broke loose. And just as he expected, they initially questioned him for being a fraud or for combining preexisting spells and claimed it as his own. However, the opinions of experts and the data captured from within the Monster field proved that this spell was indeed the real deal.

[The high ranked Wizard from the Seoul Wizard Tower, the Elf 'Remeline'.]

– When you take a look at his staff, you can see Mana being amplified by an incredible amount on that ruby the moment the spell activates. This amplification is great enough to allow a low level Wizard to display fearsome might equal to upper mid level Wizards. That's why, I posit that the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong was borrowing the power of this staff...

The next avenue of attack was, again as predicted, the staff. How could they be so predictably on the mark all the time? Sae-Jin chuckled out a bitter laughter as he continued to watch the news broadcast on the TV.

*– Despite all the controversy, today’s most actively working Wizard, the ‘Wizard of Bangbae-Dong’ has entered the top 1000 of worldwide rankings and is continuing on with his unstoppable march forward. The grimoires he corrected and released for sale have now become true treasures that many Wizard Towers around the world can’t even get their hands on due to their scarcity. And the soon-to-be-published [Bangbae-Dong Grimoire number 24] has caused a great deal of excitement and anticipation as the rumours and guesses on what it might contain boils over around the world.*

However, even after being the target of all this petty jealousy, the fame and the influence of the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong’s name was still spreading further everyday.

“I really didn’t expect the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong to be our Guild Master...”

Joo Ji-Hyuk muttered audibly, his voice full of admiration and awe.

The place was the top secret conference room built in the underground of The Monster Guild HQ without anyone’s knowledge.

Inside this conference room decorated with many top ranked artifacts, equipment, potions as well as entertainment facilities, there were seven people present at the moment.

Unlike the seriousness of the overall atmosphere, these people were sitting freely on couches while busy watching the TV: Sae-Jin, Yu Baek-Song, Joo Ji-Hyuk, Hazeline, Yi Hye-Rin, Kim Sun-Ho, and the Soo-in, Rejen.

“So, uh, that Bangbae-Dong dude is really you?” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song asked after Joo Ji-Hyuk’s utterances ended. Sae-Jin wordlessly nodded his head.

“Hmph. I heard that one of those grimoires written by Bangbae-Dong guy can cause stock prices of Wizard Towers to go up and down... What a shock...” (Yu Baek-Song)

The stock price of a Wizard Tower named “Pareum” Tower rose up from \$19 per share to over \$30 in less than a week, after it emerged that this Tower had successfully acquired Bangbae-Dong grimoires numbers 18 to 23. Actually, Sae-Jin helped out with that, since this Tower was unusually humble in their attitude.

“Mm? The head of the SID didn’t know?” (Sae-Jin)

“The information protected by our intelligence agents won’t leak out that easily, boss.”  
(Kim Sun-Ho)

Kim Sun-Ho replied instead. There were thick traces of pride in his speech.

“Seriously... You’re too much. Waaay too much... Just why did I study magic for twenty years... All I needed was a nice Trait...” (Hazeline)

These powerless words were uttered out by Hazeline, whose soul had left her around twenty minutes ago when Sae-Jin confessed to her that he was ‘the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong’.

A crystal placed next to the TV screen suddenly lit up in red colour. When Joo Ji-Hyuk hurriedly turned the TV off, Lillia’s voice leaked out from the crystal.

– *“Everyone, I’d like to convey my gratitude for your decisions to participate in this very dangerous operation. However, the leader of the Bathorys is a woman possessing the most destructive power. Please, take this last opportunity where you can quit, to think your choices over.”*

Since Sae-Jin and Hazeline had explained the plan in detail to the rest of the group using hand gestures and even pantomime, all Lillia had to do was to reaffirm their resolve and determination.

“...I know all about that Bathory woman’s power after hearing so much about it. That’s why, I agree with the opinion on getting rid of her before the situation gets worse than now.” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song said out aloud as she stroked the back of Kaiser the 2nd. Too bad, Kaiser only wanted to be on Sae-Jin’s lap, though.

– *“Of course.”*

“But, you know what? I also find your stories hard to believe.” (Yu Baek-Song)

– “...”

Yu Baek-Song’s eyes narrowed like a predator.

“Vampires are a untrustworthy bunch to begin with, so at minimum, shouldn’t you reveal yourselves to show how sincere you are?” (Yu Baek-Song)

Her ears stood up straight and stiff. And Sae-Jin promptly reached out pinched both of them tightly.

“Ouch! H, hey!! What are you doing?!”

While looking at the small white tiger jumping up in pure shock after the unexpected touching, Sae-Jin clicked his tongue and spoke.

“I’ll guarantee their credibility. Besides, now that the Lord of Vampires has awakened, how do you expect them to come out in the open?” *(TL: Just for the record, it has been mentioned in passing that the Vampire Lord possesses an ability that can control all Vampires. That includes Nosferatus as well.)*

“...I, I can still inquire about this matter, no? Still, why did you go and pinch my ears!!” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song rubbed her small ears and pouted. At that adorable appearance, everyone in the room broke out in laughter.

“In any case, have you all come to a decision? To participate in this dangerous mission, where you might lose your lives?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin asked with a hardened face.

And they answered energetically in their own preferred way.

“Alright. Then, please, head over to the tattooing area. One tattoo per month – let’s get stronger by tattooing ourselves until there’s no room left!” (Sae-Jung)

The time remaining was five months. Sae-Jin decided to give each person participating in this mission one Mana Tattoo per month.



“Doesn’t... doesn’t it hurt?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“It doesn’t hurt during the process, so be still, please.” (Sae-Jin)



“During? Then, what happens afterwards?” (Yu Baek-Song)

Everyone else got their Tattoos no problem, but strangely Yu Baek-Song kept on evading Sae-Jin’s hands.

“Un, unhand me at once!!! *Growl!! Grrroooooowwwl!!!*” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Just be still!! I’ll buy you something really tasty when we are all finished here!!” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin finally succeeded in catching her by using tasty treats as bait. It seemed that, with her lips resolutely closed shut, she was getting ready to receive her Tattoo.

But, just as the needle tip gleamed under the light, she jumped up into the air like a scalded cat, and shouted out in a really loud voice.

“NOPE!! Now that I think about it, I don’t need it since I’m already super strong!!!” (Yu Baek-Song)

“.....”

Sae-Jin shook his head, and then... spread out a white-coloured potion in front of her face.

“Eeek!! what are you doi...”

She tried to spit out the liquid that entered her mouth and shouted angrily, but less than three seconds later, she figuratively melted into a puddle.

That was a potion with the effect of inducing a deep sleep. Of course, since she was Yu Baek-Song, she would regain her consciousness in less than five minutes, but that was more than enough time.

“Whew...”

Sae-Jin sighed out and resumed the tattooing operation.

*Shudder, shudder...*

As the tattooing needle came in contact with her, Yu Baek-Song’s small body trembled

intermittently.

# Chapter 136

## The Wintering (2)

Inside the underground conference room beneath The Monster HQ, the members of the raid party were steadily strengthening their bodies. Knights trained tirelessly to get used to various Mana Tattoo enhancements, while Hazeline was getting to know more and more about the artificial heart and how it operated.

“Wow, so you can enter a complete ‘Divine Beast’ mode?” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

“Hm, hmm. That’s right. It’s only for a short while, but when I’m in the full Great White Tiger form, I fear no one. It’s not for nothing a Soo-in with a Divine Beast bloodline like me gets all the attention in the world. I mean, in the past, nations were fighting over each other to take me home first, you know?” (Yu Baek-Song)

Currently, the time was during a small break between the all-out training sessions.

When Joo Ji-Hyuk started praising Yu Baek-Song, she crossed her arms and the hot air, filled with excessive pride, bellowed out from her flaring nostrils.

Seeing her show off like this, Sae-Jin felt the need to bully her for a bit, so he stealthily sneaked near her gently-swaying tail and then, tightly grabbed it.

“Euh-haht!!”

Yu Baek-Song jumped up high into the air then began kicking towards her back. Unfortunately, her short legs weren’t going to reach Sae-Jin’s arm...

“Un, unhand me!!!”

She screamed out in unbridled rage, yet every time Sae-Jin brushed her tail, her hostility weakened bit by bit. Having her tail stroked by a person with a nice scent – that sensation made her unhappy but at the same time made her feel good as well.

“Let, let go..... Euha~.”

In the end, she went down for good like a fish flapping helplessly outside the water. While carrying an insidious smile, he took her tail that was needlessly longer than her body, and chomped down on it. And well, that roused yet another powerful reaction out of her.

“...No matter how I see it, doesn't it look like Miss Yu Baek-Song enjoys being tormented a bit too much?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Just as Yu Baek-Song was about to escape from the grasp of an evil entity known as Kim Sae-Jin, Yi Hye-Rin teasingly spoke up.

“What nonsense are you talking about?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“No, well, it's nothing... By the way, Miss Baek-Song. Do you know, by any chance, what is an 'S' and an 'M'?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“...What the heck are those?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“It's just alphabets... Oh, would you like to choose? Which one do you like more, an S or an M?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

After sensing a somewhat suspicious air coming off of Yi Hye-Rin, Yu Baek-Song's brows furrowed deeply. However, Yi Hye-Rin simply smiled thickly and egged her on to make a choice.

“Please hurry.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

The interested gazes of the guild members gathered on her. Yu Baek-Song deeply wondered about this, thinking whether she needed to do this for real, before finally opening her lips in a cautious manner.

“.....An M?”

At the same time, lots of laughter broke out. Yu Baek-Song tilted her head with a face full of questions. Sae-Jin held back his laughter and stood next to her and then, proceeded to lightly tap on her small head as he spoke in a serious voice.

“Everyone, please stop. Do you find it fun to tease a little kid?” (Sae-Jin)

“...Who are you calling a little kid? You, stop before I bite you to death.” (Yu Baek-Song)

“...Cough.”

And so, as they were busy chatting and laughing among themselves, the door to their right that led into the ‘isolation barrier’ chamber opened up.

*\*SFX for slow, meandering footsteps\**

A deeply-haggard looking Hazeline weakly walked out while her gaze was fixed to the floor.

“Miss Hazeline, are you okay?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin pushed a prepared mug of coffee that also contained a potion with an effect of recovering energy to her.

“...Imightgetbetterifyouhugmejustonce.”

While receiving the mug, she took a glance around her and then, like a machine gun, quickly whispered to him.

“Ah, oh. Uh, that is...”

Too bad, since Sae-Jin knew her real feelings, he couldn’t just brush this aside as a simple joke. Seeing him like this, Hazeline smiled and spoke first.

“I’m just joking. It’s a joke.”

Hazeline sipped on the mug while walking over to the couch where everyone else was sitting down. Regular Dark Elves didn’t like to hang around other people, but still, she had a good rapport with the members of this team. It was par for the course, really – since everyone gathered here were all good natured and thoughtful people.

“Oh, right. What is Knight Kim Yu-Rin doing right now? Hasn’t it been already two months?” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Joo Ji-Hyuk spoke up. Momentarily, Hazeline’s hands holding the coffee mug spasmed slightly.

“She’s resting well in some hut on the East Coast. I think, all of the fatigue built up over her entire career just flooded out the gates because of that event not too long ago. You

see, my team captain, ever since entering the Knights Order at the age of 17, she has never gone on a holiday until now..." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"...Hmm."

With a complicated expression, Sae-Jin brought his mug of coffee close to his face. That word, 'hut', got on his conscious just a tad.

"Did you go and visit her?" (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

"Of course. I was so shocked when I got there, you know? Was this her going through menopause? Or was the fact that she never got to own a pet until now finally getting to her? Or... was she depressed because the Hero Orc rejected her...?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

*Shudder.*

Sae-Jin's body shuddered imperceptibly. That last bit really poked his conscience good.

"But she was like... she just smiled this lonely smile, and said nothing back. Didn't deny, didn't even acknowledge it... No, you know what she did? She said that she just wanted to rest for awhile, then prepared a meal for us to eat together." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Sae-Jin felt a slight case of guilty conscience washing over him.

'...It can't be... lovesickness, right?' (Sae-Jin)

"Oh, well. Let's talk about that some other time. Guild Master, just when are you going to tell us about your Trait?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin quickly changed the subject, then.

"Uh? Oh, my Trait..."

Sae-Jin hadn't told them, other than Kim Sun-Ho and Hazeline, what his 'Trait' was.

But, when the time came, he was thinking of revealing his Leviathan Form and nothing else. Just as well, he couldn't reveal them in the first place, anyways. His Wolf Form was the 'Lycan', and the Hero Orc Form was tangled up in Kim Yu-Rin's mess, so...

"Maybe two months? I'll let you know then." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin replied so and smiled brightly.

“What~? Oh, come on now~~. We already told you ours, though~~.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Sae-Jin ignored Yi Hye-Rin’s fake jeering and entered the isolation barrier chamber where Hazeline had been inside just now.

“...Wow.”

As expected – thanks most likely to Hazeline’s magic training, not one spot of the chamber was left undamaged. Abrasions, deep gouges, things overturned, things crushed to bits, etc, etc...

“Hmm, hmm.”

For now, he sat down in the middle of a crater on the floor.

And then, while revealing the claws of the Wolf on one hand, he brought up the Status Window for one of his Skills.

[Chain Claws] [Skill Proficiency Level: B+]

Then, to add to this, he summoned lightning magic on the other hand.

*Crackle, sparkle*

Blindingly white bolts of electricity buzzed around his hand. Sure enough, the Status Windows got activated by using this mid-ranked spell.

[Lightning Bolt] [Skill Proficiency Level: A]

The Status Windows were indeed very convenient existences. Even magic spells that

were not Skills were recorded and helped him utilise them in various other ways.

Such as, when combining different Skills, or when he was about to inscribe a Magic Tattoo...

And now, he was going to use 'Skill combination'.

He had used this Skill a few times in the past, but the increases in the cooling down period between each use versus the grade of the resulting Skill proved to be poor so he stopped using it altogether.

Using this Skill was very easy. All he had to was think about combining them, and bring the Skills together.

So, when he combined the boiling hot arcs of electricity with the gleaming claws, then...

*\*SFX for very unpleasant screeches\**

First, a horrifying screeching cry of electricity akin to nails on the blackboard, and then, *Phurhung!!* A huge explosion occurred next.

[Skill combination has been successful.] [New combined Skill: Lightning Chain Claw]

– The host can fire a chain of lightning in the shape of claws, or the lightning itself can be imbued on the claws themselves. Depending on the Proficiency Level of the Skill, the host can utilise the electrons in the air to infinitely spam the lightning, or by combining together with the target's blood, cause electrocution of the target.

– According to the resulting grade (Mid), the cool down time for the Skill is: [99 Days, 23 Hours, 00 Minutes, 59 Seconds.]

"Oww, yeah."

He was only trying to come up with something new, so he could record it on the 24th grimoire, but this was simply beyond his expectations.



“Oh well... I can just lower the power a bit and then publish the book.”

He didn't think too much about it and pulled out an empty grimoire.

He grabbed a pen and began drawing the anatomy of a person, the most efficient path for the Mana's circulation, as well as some tips on using this magic the best. Thanks to the Skill, Goblins' Craftsmanship, he could even draw right down to the most minute detail.

To be clear, this wasn't what the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong had been doing until now. This was him creating a new spell.

The spell [Lightning] may have formed the base, but the new spell displayed a might that far outstripped the original magic.

“Huh-huh.”

But, as he was writing this, an unknown smile kept creeping up on his lips. A desire to defeat others even began boiling up.

Always trying to bring him down by saying he plagiarised, that he only knew how to correct, etc, etc... What would those conceited Wizard Towers say after seeing this spell? Most likely, they won't even get to enjoy the moral victory this time.

‘Wizards speak not with words, but with actions, indeed.’



Time was like the endlessly flowing river; it didn't stop even for one moment.

The boiling hot rays of the sun had cooled down before anyone noticed the change and the Autumn visited in full force, dying the falling leaves brown.

And on the day the falling petals of flowers dancing in the cooling winds were broadcast on the television screens.

The grimoire number 24 of the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong series, [Linked Lightning Claws] got published.

Unlike in the past when he simply corrected, supplemented and/or enhanced existing

spells, this grimoire featured a completely new spell. A new footage of the magic in action was uploaded to the blog; the composition of the grimoire was so perfect, not one fault could be found.

Wizard Towers had to experience yet another round of massive shock to the system.

This time, though, their level of shock was on another world altogether. Unlike fixing an existing spell, creating a new one outright was something even highly ranked Wizards found very difficult to do.

Many Wizard Towers threw their all in finding errors in this grimoire but... The Pareum Tower had received the book before everyone else, and its Tower Lord got to study the book for a whole week, before he replicated the spell in full, albeit a lot weaker, glory. Which meant others had to accept the reality of the situation.

Now normally, new spells came to light maybe 5~6 times a year in Korea. It depended on countries, but the numbers didn't exceed two digits regardless of the territory. Taking the number of Wizards active in Korea – around fifty thousand – it wasn't wrong to say that the creation of a new magic spell was the most prestigious achievement all Wizards dreamed of accomplishing one day.

However, someone who didn't even work for a Wizard Tower, someone who hadn't even graduated from a Wizard Academy, someone with an unprofessional name like the 'Wizard of Bangbae-Dong' had done something this incredibly difficult...

Many Wizards belonging to Wizard Towers could only despair at the unbridgeable chasm existing between them and the mysterious Wizard.

*– The magic spell created by the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong, the [Linked Lightning Claws], has been inspected by the Pareum Wizard Tower who received the grimoire first... And without an issue, the spell has been accepted as a legitimate new creation. To correct 23 grimoires in just over a year, and also, to create a brand new spell, too... It can only be described as a truly frightening talent.*

The Tower Lord of the Seoul Wizard Tower, that held quite a pronounced hostile relationship with the Bangbae-Dong Wizard, the Elf Romaine, personally held a press conference. As an aside, the Seoul Tower placed high importance on its member's *alma mater*, as well as his or her bloodline.

This announcement sounded like that of a surrender to Kim Sae-Jin's ears.

And soon after this declaration of surrender, the blog of Bangbae-Dong Wizard became full with words of congratulations from high level leaders from various world-famous Wizard Towers, as well as earnest requests to purchase the new grimoire.

Unfortunately, he couldn't get to savour the sense of victory for too long.

Because... the day of the fated battle was approaching rapidly.

"Hey, hey, could that be?"

The place currently was the East Sea.

For the first time after a long while, Kim Sae-Jin came out to this part of the sea in the Leviathan Form.

"Is that... the Azure Dragon?"

The reporters had come here after getting the heads up from Sae-Jin, but now, they were deeply puzzled by the sudden change to the colour of the scales of the 'Azure Dragon'.

This was all part of the plan – to show off the transformed look of the Azure Dragon, and to fan the flames of Bathory's curiosity and her small-ish (?) desire to possess him.

"Something seems to have changed?"

The gathered reporters muttered in confusion. But soon enough, just like the professionals that they were, they focused on the reason why they were there in the first place, and Sae-Jin too began his part by showing off.

He smiled as brightly – as adorably – as possible towards schools of fish that came to swim around him; he raised a bit of a wave to surf on it; he even pulled a dignified face and stared at the sun.

Cameras didn't miss a single valuable shot and captured them all.

"Appearing after a lengthy hiatus, the appearance of the Guardian of the East has changed significantly. The hues of its scales has changed from the clear blue to a delicate, but noble silver hue. We do not know whether it's because the Azure Dragon has grown even further, or if it shed its scales like other animals molting, but it

certainly instils much trust in the Azure Dragon as we watch it interact with the rest of the ocean's residents."

After about a hour of this, Sae-Jin could hear the 'closing' comment from one of the reporters. He felt the rush of fatigue from acting overtaking him.

"We're done here."

The reporters wiped the sweat off and ended their work for now, but the cameramen continued to film the Azure Dragon.

Because of this... Sae-Jin had to act for a little bit longer.

# Chapter 137

## The Wintering (3)

The appearance of the Azure Dragon as seen in the video footage was, for a lack of better description, endearing. Smiles automatically found their ways to people's faces, when they saw the Dragon caring for the marine lifeforms that had build their homes in the East Sea; the sense of admiration and trust in the creature could only soar higher when seeing it survey the distant horizon, in case an unwelcome Monster pops out.

And its scales changing its hue to faint silver – although making it a bit tricky to call it Azure now – caused a storm of curiosity and desire to learn the reason from the public as well.

“.....Ahhh.”

Currently, inside the penthouse suite of a certain luxury hotel.

The most likely candidate to inherit the position of power from the current Vampire Lord, “queen” Prillani Bathory was dazedly staring at the image of the Azure Dragon being projected on to a wall.

As she looked on at the ‘new’ Azure Dragon, the powerful emotion she had to suppress for a long time because of her inept and dumb subordinates’ dissuasions reared its ugly head once more.

That emotion was, of course, the desire to possess; the burning curiosity and her throbbing heart, almost a fetish-like avarice.

*\*SFX for a cheerful growl.\**

She saw the Dragon smile brightly as it surveyed the lifeforms – fish – it protected. She wanted so badly to corrupt that smile whenever she saw it. To make it more savage, more cruel, more violent. To make it only submit to her, and to see it bare its fangs at anyone else that wasn't her...

“My lady...”

As Bathory began stomping on the ground while completely unaware of doing it herself, an Elder Apostle called out to her in worry.

“What?” (Bathory)

It was just a single word, but her tone of voice possessed enough killing intent within it to send chills down the Apostle’s backside. He couldn’t dare to meet her eye to eye, and kept his gaze fixed to the floor.

“Just like before... there are just too many eyewitnesses in the East Sea, my Lady.”  
(Apostle)

The Elder Apostles, the only ones possessing enough status to seek an audience with their future queen, tried their utmost to stop her. Although the Bathory girl was someone with a stubborn personality that just had to do what she wanted in order to please herself, by using the excuse of their grand scheme of ‘returning to the homeland’, they could tie her up in the meantime.

“I also know, okay? I mean, why should I pay attention to that thing, when I had a long and nice chat with the Lord...”

*\*SFX for a cute-ish yawn of a Dragon\**

As soon as those words left her lips.

A unique scene of the Azure Dragon yawning and stretching its arms came on the screen. Bathory looked at that in a total daze and took a big gulp of her overflowing saliva.

“...W, why would I pay attention to something like that?” (Bathory)

Unlike her words, though, her eyes were firmly glued to the wall where the images were being projected to.

“That is a relief...” (Apostle)

“If my Lady desires to possess the creature, then, isn’t it possible to capture it during Winter?”

However.

Suddenly, a certain unnamed Apostle stepped forward. He was a young Apostle whose combat powers had seen an abrupt increase lately and had quickly climbed up into the position within the Bathory's royal guards.

"Y, you b\*stard, what are y..."

"Mm? What do you mean by that?" (Bathory)

The aged Elder Apostle, almost succeeding in pacifying her, panicked and whispered to the new guy, but those words uttered by him was more than enough to rouse her interest thoroughly.

"My Lady!! You mustn't!! Right now, we..."

"You, shut your mouth, and you, I'm all ears." (Bathory)

Bathory slowly stroked her lips with her slender fingers while staring at the young Apostle.

"I'm sure my Lady's great insight must have informed you already, but if I was allowed to say it... Firstly, it is cold and barren during the winter months. That is why, Monsters become even more violent during this period. Humans don't like the cold, so they try not to go out, meaning, who would think of heading over to the East Sea? In other words, there will be far less number of eyes by then."

The young Apostle's name was 'Rhosrahdell'. Caught by Sae-Jin in the past and becoming his slave with the power of 'the Dark Energy Link', this Vampire was reciting the information given to him secretly by Sae-Jin in full. *(TL: This guy made his first appearance in chapters 89 and 90.)*

"And also, I'm of an opinion that the Lady Bathory's plans would greatly benefit our overall scheme as well. Maybe other Apostles don't think the same, but isn't it rather blindingly obvious that brainwashing a powerful divine creature like that Dragon would bolster our forces even more greatly? That is why, I believe that we shouldn't mind small losses if it means we will be gaining greatly in the end." (Rhosrahdell)

"You young one who doesn't know anything... My Lady, please do not listen to him. It may be true to some extent that the number of witnesses might decrease, but there is still no guarantee that brainwashing will be successful..."

“If it’s you, my Lady, I have no doubts whatsoever.” (Rhosrahdell)

Rhosrahdell did his best to butter up to her, but suspicions grew larger on Bathory’s face as her eyes remained on him.

During her lifetime, she had met her share of treacherous subordinates. That is why, even she could easily figure out that unending and baseless praising were the hallmarks of those slimy b\*stards.

Facing this eerie silence, Rhosrahdell’s face hardened slightly, but before the suspicion against him could grow larger, he projected the screen of his phone in the air.

“To be more helpful to you my Lady, I have been slowly advancing my membership grade in the Azure Dragon website until now. I participated in their meetings, and even donated a great deal of money as well. And as a result, I am now able to find out the Dragon’s radius and scope of movement.” (Rhosrahdell)

It was true that, with his clearance, Rhosrahdell could access ‘VVIP’ level of information from the Azure Dragon website. As an aside, the membership advancement was so strict that not even Bathory, who had secretly joined, could advance past the ‘Gold’ membership even now.

“...Mmm...”

Then, Bathory’s expression softened a little. Immediately sensing the change, Rhosrahdell quickly informed her of the latest development.

“The Azure Dragon during its growth phase requires a lot of sleep, so the most likely time it will be seen again is around the evening of 25th of December... or so they say. This can not be any more ideal, my Lady. Not only is it in the middle of Winter, it’s also Christmas, so people will choose to spend the day with their families, meaning there should be no one out there by the ocean.”

Rhosrahdell stopped with his words right there.

However, he certainly dared not to look up for he lacked the necessary balls to do so. What kind of facial expressions would she be making right now? Could she be getting ready to drain every drop of blood out from his body at this very moment?

“Hey you, get lost.” (Bathory)



Rhosradel's heart fell to the bottom. He needed to quickly disappear from her sight, yet his body shook so much, he couldn't move.

He wondered whether this was how he was going to die, but fortunately for him, her voice wasn't directed towards his direction.

"Lady Bathory!! We have a far bigger plan to execute, rather than that Azure Dragon...!!"

That was a desperate cry of the elderly Elder Apostle.

"Who do you think you are to raise your voice!!" (Bathory)

In shock, Rhosrahdell quickly lifted his head. He saw the aged Elder deeply kowtowing and apologising his heart out.

"...Please forgive this foolish old man."

"I know you are not some treacherous b\*stard, okay? However, I think this guy over here will be more useful for this job, don't you think? Hey, kid." (Bathory)

"Y, yes?"

Bathory looked over Rhosrahdell once and licked her lips slowly.

"Stay here from now on." (Bathory)

"That, that means..." (Rhosrahdell)

"You're moving up in the world. Congrats. Of course, who knows for how long you can hold on, though." (Bathory)

She smirked lazily and extended her foot. It was a pale but refined foot. There were faint lines of blood vessels visible on her skin like some kind of pedicure treatment gone wrong.

This was the sign of submission and loyalty that Bathory liked to perform. Rhosrahdell very cautiously began licking her toes.



November, when the Winter was getting steadily closer. There was a strange and tense atmosphere circulating among the members present within the secret underground conference room.

– *“The day of the operation is 25th of December – the Christmas day.”*

Lillia’s voice came out from the communication crystal placed on top of a table.

“That’s good. People won’t come out to the sea during Christmas... It’s fine if it’s only us who has to suffer. It’s a day that comes around only once in a year, after all.”

Yi Hye-Rin jokingly complained.

“But still, I can’t hardly believe it even now... Guild Master, your Trait is really you transforming into the Azure Dragon, I mean, into the Leviathan?!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Sae-Jin nodded his head wordlessly. Yi Hye-Rin and Joo Ji-Hyuk stared at him dazedly for a while, before cautiously asked him.

“Uhm, maybe...”

“Is it possible to show us?”

“No can do.” (Sae-Jin)

Of course, he could do it. But he sure as hell didn’t feel like it. After all, they would treat him like a plush toy if he did change.

Joo Ji-Hyuk chomped down hard on the biscuit as if he was upset, while Yi Hye-Rin frowned deeply as she dug in deeper into the backrest of the couch.

*Ttiring-*

A text message arrived on Yi Hye-Rin’s phone at that time. She slowly pulled her phone out and checked the message, before letting out a long sigh.

“Excuse me. I am not supposed to tell Yu Sae-Jung what we are doing no matter what, yes?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“...Was that from Sae-Jung just now?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes. She’s asking me if I’m with you right now.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Tell her that you are not sure, that I must still be at work,” said Sae-Jin as he began putting on his jacket to leave.

Yi Hye-Rin’s mouth went O-shaped and her expression showed her confusion.

“...You’re leaving? You’re rather unexpectedly well domesticated, aren’t you?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“...What do you mean by unexpected?” (Sae-Jin)

“No, well... This situation, no matter who sees it, it’s kinda lewd, you know?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin pointed at his thighs. On top of his hardened and muscular thighs that wouldn’t lose to slabs of granite, Yu Baek-Song was comfortably taking a nap with the softest snoring anyone could imagine. On top of this, up until a few seconds ago, Sae-Jin was busy brushing her ears and hair with his right hand, while the left was busy stroking her tail...

“...What can I do, when she’s so adorable like this? Besides, she came up all on her own, you know? I didn’t coax her or anything.” (Sae-Jin)

...Well, he did lead her a little bit, though.

He lightly flicked Yu Baek-Song’s ear while making his weak-sauce excuse. As the ear was sensitive to touch, it straightened up immediately, before falling back down in a cute manner. And when he lightly grasped her tail...

*\*SFX for a cute growl of a cat\**

...She let off a cute cat-like groan.

“Yes, she is really cute, though...” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Besides, if we count her age in human terms, she’s only 15, 16, right? It’s like having a younger sister.” (Sae-Jin)

“Well, I guess you’re right... But can I also touch her?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin sneakily reached out with her hand, but Sae-Jin was cold as he slapped her hand away.

*Slap!*

“The white fur might get dirty.” (Sae-Jin)

“...What?! Isn’t this the tyranny of the Guild Master, saying my hands are dirty?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Nope. She might wake up if it’s not a familiar set of hands.” (Sae-Jin)

“Mmm...”

Right on cue, Yu Baek-Song rubbed her face all over his thighs and began to fret in her sleep. Sae-Jin busily moved his hands and gently brushed her nose, ears, and tail as well as other parts safe to pat, which helped her fall deeper back into her sleep.

“You almost woke her up.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Seriously, you really know how to look after a child. I’m sure Sae-Jung is very happy.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Sae-Jin smiled in satisfaction and looked down at Yu Baek-Song. Unfortunately, all his efforts in trying not to wake her up were all in vain.

“AAAHHK!!!!”

A loud scream pierced through the isolation barrier and entered the room. Waking up immediately from her sleep, Yu Baek-Song jumped right out of his thighs and high up in the air, while the members present in the room hurriedly ran towards the door and yanked it open.

“Miss Hazeline!! Are you alri...”

“I did it!! I did it!!” (Hazeline)

However, it wasn’t a scream, but a shout of excitement. Everyone looked at her with

their mouths wide open, while Hazeline hopped and bounced around as she shouted out again and again.

“Did my voice leak out just now?” (Hazeline)

“Yes... Oh, did you succeed in controlling the artificial heart?”

“Yes!! I wielded it perfectly just now!!” (Hazeline)

Hazeline kept on shouting out in joy while she took large strides forward. She then brushed past Joo Ji-Hyuk, went past Yu Baek-Song and Yi Hye-Rin, and proceeded to embrace to Kim Sae-Jin who was right at the back.

“Perfect!! A perfection!! I definitely know what to do now!!” (Hazeline)

“...Uhm, Miss Hazeline?” (Sae-Jin)

“...Well, really, doesn't this seem like such an undeniably immoral thing no matter who sees it~~~?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin shot him a pointed stare full of questions. Sae-Jin cautiously pushed Hazeline back and to her credit, she too took three steps back in embarrassment.

“Keum. Ah, I'm so sorry. I was just too excited just now...” (Hazeline)

But it was a bit too late by then; there was a somewhat complicated silence descending on the conference room.

“Hey, gimme something to eat.”

...That was, excluding Yu Baek-Song who was busy tugging at Sae-Jin's sleeve.



And the time was now 30th of November.

While standing by the edge of the East Sea, Sae-Jin took a long look at the Leviathan's scale in his hand. As long as he eats this, the growth percentage of his Leviathan Form would increase greatly, and his overall might would also explode higher, far beyond comparison.

However, his worries were just as big. He was worried about his 'ego' being swept away this time around with the sudden increase of power in this Monster Form.

Lillia said there was nothing to worry about. She was definitely sure of it. It was anyone's guess where her confidence came from, but for now, he had no choice but to believe her, and eat this thing. Well, he needed lots of time to get used to the newly-strengthened Leviathan Form, after all.

"Fuu..."

He breathed in deeply to chase away his fears.

Sae-Jin transformed into the Leviathan Form and swallowed the scale right away.

*"Kkeu-euhk....."*

As countless alert windows popped up in his view, Sae-Jin was assaulted by the unbearable pain that felt like all of his bones were contracting and then stretching relentlessly.

[You have ingested an adult Leviathan's scale!] [The growth rate will rapidly rise up to 25%! The bottleneck, '1st level growth limit' has been reached!] [With the aid of the adult Leviathan's scale, this bottleneck has been overcome! The growth rate has increased past 25% and has reached 33%! A pair of small wings will grow on the back of the Leviathan!] [Skills 'Leviathan's comprehension' and 'Mana Body' will increase in level by one!] [The Skill, 'God of the Sea' has been unlocked!]

...

...

# Chapter 138

## The Wintering (4)

It felt like his entire body was forcibly being stretched. This was a kind of pain where he was sure of *something* yanking on his head and limbs from all directions. Did the torturous pain from the dismemberment execution of the medieval times feel this bad, the one where the head and limbs were tied to ends of horses and then pulled apart? It also felt like his throat had clammed up and as a result, he couldn't even voice out his suffering. He could only shut his eyes tightly and endure.

In the meantime, a wondrous change took place with the Leviathan's body.

In human terms, this was a moment when a child transformed into a teenager.

His tail extended out even more gracefully than before; the body's length increased and became bulkier, and a horn on his forehead shone with beautiful radiance that easily exceeded most famous jewelry ever known to men.

There was still some cherubic hints left within the facial features, but now it was far more sculpted and perfect with not one glaring flaw visible to the naked eye. It was the type of a countenance that sort of resembled an ocean-bound lifeform, a reptilian, and a mammal – like, a shark, a lizard and a wolf – combined together.

It indeed resembled a dragon from all those legendary mythical tales of the past.

“.....”

However, the Leviathan in question was unable to sense this earth-shaking change taking place – he could only float helplessly on the surface of the ocean, completely lost within the sea of pain wrecking his entire body.

The sight of a 7-metre-long dragon-like Monster floating like a corpse was indeed a marvelously strange thing, enough to cause any enterprising Hunters passing by to think they must've won the lottery or something.

But thankfully, there was no other soul to be found under the darkened navy-blue sky.

And thus, the Leviathan was afforded enough to time to overcome the growing pains.

Time passed by and eventually, the dawn's faint lights shimmered off the ocean's surface. Sae-Jin finally opened his eyes after 6 straight hours of pain-induced unconsciousness.

*"Buah... Puh-euh-euh..."*

He didn't die, and had survived the ordeal. He no longer felt any pain either. He breathed out a long sigh of relief. Too bad, that sigh became a horrifying tsunami that seemed to overturn the heavens, and began rushing towards the East Sea's coastline.

*"Ah."*

For a wave created by a simple sigh, it being over 20 metres tall seemed horrifyingly unbalanced. Sae-Jin the Leviathan's face crumpled in unsightly manner as he wondered how he should stop this calamity from hitting the shore.

It was then.

He only thought about it, yet the vigorous tsunami wave began sprouting many little water bubbles, before dissolving into a cute little puddle and it soon disappeared completely from the view.

*"...?"*

*But, uh, I didn't do anything, though?*

Kim Sae-Jin tilted his head this way and that, but the alert windows cleared up his confusion.

[The Proficiency Level for the Skill 'God of the Sea' has increased!] [God of the Sea]  
[Proficiency Level: 35%]

– The host can control the ocean with his 'will' only. Mana will be consumed, of course, but would there be a limit to Mana's supply for a Leviathan when he's in the ocean?



‘...Ohhhh.’

Sae-Jin stayed in the water and played around for a while longer. Whenever he moved his body, he could rouse up tsunami waves, destructive storm winds and other natural ocean-bound calamities.

After fooling around unchecked for a bit like that, Sae-Jin quietly transformed back into the human form and stepped back on the dry land. At the same time, his mobile phone rang a short alarm.

[Emergency broadcast!! An earthquake-tsunami detected on the East Sea, time 04:53 AM.]

“...Looks like I should act in moderation.”

He smirked slightly and headed back towards his home.



Afterwards, Sae-Jin devoted most of his time in getting familiar with the newly-developed powers of the Leviathan. Meanwhile, the members of the raid team continued to grow every day by training and sharpening their abilities.

That’s how the days continued to rapidly flow by – one day, two days, three, four...

“Dispatching the Kraken again?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes, sir. This time, it’s in England.” (Jo Hahn-Sung)

15 days before the fated day of the operation, when everyone was feeling tense.

Jo Hahn-Sung personally came to see Sae-Jin in his office. It was because the British Foreign Office had made the urgent request to dispatch the Kraken.

“Okay, so what’s going on over there now?” (Sae-Jin)

“Apparently, a Boss-level snake Monster called ‘Mangsasa’ has built a nest within the Pennines mountain range, sir. Since the geographical location isn’t ideal for battle, the British are in a bind as they also can’t leave it alone, but it seems that they thought of the Italian incident from a while back.” (Jo Hahn-Sung) (*TL: Mangsasa is a set of Hanja*

*that the author seemed to have invented by himself. Individual words translates to "Ruinous/Destroyed (Mang) Heinous/Evil (Sa) Snake (Sa). I couldn't really find a snake-type monster with a name similar to this so I thought I'd leave it in romanised form. Hopefully you're fine with that.)*

".....Hmm."

If this was any other time period, he would agree to send the Kraken, but he had to give it a serious thought right now. After all, the Kraken would play a big role when fighting the Bathory woman soon.

"How much are they willing to fork out?" (Sae-Jin)

"Just like then, they are putting up the important loot from the raid." (Jo Hahn-Sung)

'Important loot' probably meant the Monster's Mana Stone, as well as parts of its carcass – in a snake's case, its fangs.

"Hmm... What is your opinion on this, Mister Hahn-Sung?" (Sae-Jin)

"I don't have anything particular to add, sir. After all, the compensation proposed by them are not for the benefit of the company as a whole, but it lines up more closely to the Guild Master's hobbies." (Jo Hahn-Sung)

"....."

Sae-Jin narrowed his eyes and glared at him. From some time ago, the company took centre stage in this guy's eyes...

Quickly deciphering the meaning behind Sae-Jin's unhappy glare, Jo Hahn-Sung hurriedly added more.

"Kehuem. However, if it was up to me, I would agree to do it, sir. A Kraken isn't going to wear out anyways from the repeated use, so it doesn't make a lot of sense to let an opportunity to make profit slip away. Plus, it seems that they are quite desperate now, seeing how the British Foreign Secretary came to speak to me here in the Guild, sir." (Jo Hahn-Sung)

"That happened? Fine. But... how long will it take, according to the Brits?" (Sae-Jin)

It was fine to send the Kraken, but since the creature would play a part in the Bathory hunting, at a minimum, he had to recall it before the 25th.

“Since it’s only one day’s travel from here to Britain, they are suggesting four days, tops.”

“Mm... Alright, cool. Agree to a set of dates and let me know.”

Finishing his words up to here, Sae-Jin was about to hand over the documents containing his permission to Jo Hahn-Sung.

“Ah, actually... The thing is, sir, they are waiting outside the office right now.” (Jo Hahn-Sung)

“...Eh?”

“Please come in, everyone!!” (Jo Hahn-Sung)

As soon as Jo Hahn-Sung’s shout ended, foreigners wearing clean-cut formal suits poured into Sae-Jin’s office. And there were 15 of them. The spacious office became half-full in no time.

“Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to meet with us!!”

A man who could be the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom shouted out in broken Korean and bent his waist forward 90 degrees. His colleagues echoed his movement and did the same.

Sae-Jin faltered from his seat, quickly got up and asked them to sit down first.

“Ah, uh, yes, well, uh, please, take a seat. I’m not sure what is the meaning of this sudden visit, though.”

“Firstly, excuse my rude behaviour and allow me get to the main topic. These are the all the information compiled for the Boss Monster, Mangsasa.”

From the suitcases they carried, documents after documents were pulled out in sequential order. Since it was 15 people producing documents, the seemingly-wide conference table soon became a grave of papers in no time. Sae-Jin’s expression naturally crumpled as well.

“The details of our proposed compensation can be found on this document, here. On top of this, our government guarantees an one-off payment of £10 million for the dispatch itself. This fee is yours, even if the Monster Mangsasa is not defeated...”

The Foreign Secretary rapidly fired his words out. Sae-Jin searched for Jo Hahn-Sung, but he had already evacuated from the office, and that left Sae-Jin to sit there and listen to the briefing related to the Boss Monster for the next 30 minutes or so.

“...And that is all we have. Guild Master Kim Sae-Jin-*nim*, please lend us your aid.”

“Please help us.”

“Please help us.”

At the end of the briefing, all the officers from the UK Foreign Office lowered their heads with sincere facial expressions. Seeing 15 high ranking group of men from a foreign country doing this sure made Sae-Jin feel quite odd at that moment. Embarrassed yet content, burdened yet feeling boastful, that was how he felt.

“However, I thought there were many outstanding people in the UK? So why...?” (Sae-Jin)

“At the moment, within the United Kingdom’s borders, we have two Boss level Monsters to deal with – the Mangsasa and the ‘Preven’. Our forces are currently focused on combating the Preven which has been active near the city of Oxford. However, if the Mangsasa decides to aim for the gap in our forces and leave its nest during this time, and head South, then...”

The rays of hope shining out from the blue eyes of the Foreign Secretary were quite burdensome to behold.

Sae-Jin massaged his forehead for the next ten minutes, looking as if he was in a serious thinking process, before slowly opening his mouth.



The Boss Monster-related Incident Special Squad, based in London.

A massive screen to the front projected the image of the Boss Monster, while on the lengthy desk shaped like an unfolded fan, countless documents were piled on top.

Equally many team members were silently holding their breaths, waiting for the answer from their Foreign Secretary who had flown over to Korea.

– *“The negotiation has been completed.”*

A small commotion erupted as soon as the Secretary’s voice came out of the speakers.

“...What are the results?”

The Prime Minister of United Kingdom, ‘Reiden’, cautiously asked. He was still uneasy about this whole thing. Should he have gone there instead of the Foreign Affairs Secretary? Did the deal collapse because he chose the national pride over its success?

– *“Ha-ah...”*

A long and drawn out sigh came from the other side of the line. Since it sounded like the sound of defeat, the listeners also let out long sighs as well.

However.

The Foreign Secretary was simply pulling a prank. He shouted out in a very excited voice.

– *“We did it!! Sir Kim Sae-Jin agreed to dispatch the Kraken right this minute!!”*

Silence invaded the room for a short moment. The listeners hadn’t had the chance yet to fully understand the Secretary’s words.

“R, really?”

The first to react was Prime Minister Reiden. He adjusted his glasses and asked again.

– *“Yes, of course!!”*

Right away, cries of cheers exploded out and documents flew up in the air.

It was a scene straight out of a Hollywood movie. However, the Prime Minister understood full well this wasn’t some cliched scene from a disaster movie, that this was really happening.



*– Kim Sae-Jin’s Kraken showed off yet another incredible display of power. This time, it was in the United Kingdom. The Kraken was even more powerful compared to when it fought off against the demon Asmodeus. This report is compiled by the reporter, Kim Young-Ho.*

Sae-Jin might have overlooked this fact, but the Kraken’s Stats also improved when the Leviathan Form powered up. That was why the Kraken was able to fight against Mangsasa almost one on one and win – if the final attack from the Knight affiliated with the London-based Knights Order, Romelo, was excluded, then it was not wrong to say the fight was purely one on one.

“That guy is also being included in our plan, right?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin asked as she appreciated the Kraken’s absolute might shown on the TV screen.

“But seriously... why is a squid shooting out electricity? How mysterious.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

That was because Sae-Jin tattooed the ‘Lightning Chain Claws’ to the suction pads of the Kraken.

“Yes, the Kraken is also taking part.” (Sae-Jin)

“No, *Sahrahng*, it’s *Sahrahng* taking part.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline interjected and corrected Sae-Jin.

“Yes. *Sahrahng* is taking part in the battle.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Its name is *Sahrahng*?” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song tilted her head and asked back.

It was right then when some more words came out from the TV.

*–... This trustworthy Kraken’s name is now known to be ‘Sahrahng’, and also the personal pet of The Monster Guild’s Master, Kim Sae-Jin. Breathing a sigh of relief with the Kraken’s dispatch, the UK government sent words of gratitude to Kim Sae-Jin, and also,*

*to the Korean government who facilitated the negotiations...*

“You see? The name’s Sahrahng. For now, let’s turn off the TV.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin turned the TV off. Since this was the last chance to watch it, everyone gathered here showed some regret, but it couldn’t be helped.

Today’s date was 22nd of December. With only three days to go before the day of the operation, and so little time left, they had to be ready to react at a moment’s notice.

– *“...Has everyone finished with their preparations?”*

These words belonged to Lillia, coming from the communication crystal.

“We have.” (Sae-Jin)

– *“In that case, everyone except Mister Kim Sae-Jin, please enter the isolation barrier chamber. We’ve prepared a special mechanism that will transport you to where we are.”*

“...What about Mister Sae-Jin?” (Hazeline)

Hazeline asked in suspicion.

– *“Mister Sae-Jin will act as a lure for Bathory.”*

“Isn’t that too dangerous?” (Hazeline)

– *“No, it won’t be. Certainly, he will be in a lot less danger than us. After all, Bathory’s ultimate aim is to capture the Azure Dragon alive.”*

“...Oh. You’re right.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline lightly clapped her hands and got up. Following her, Joo Ji-Hyuk, Yi Hye-Rin, Kim Sun-Ho and Rejen also got up from their seats.

“...Miss Yu Baek-Song? Aren’t you coming?”

...That was, with the notable exception of Yu Baek-Song.

While twisting her body this way and that, she showed no signs of leaving Sae-Jin’s

side.

“What are you doing? Hurry up!!” (Hazeline)

Hazeline called out to her in a somewhat uncomfortable voice.

The surprising thing was, Hazeline and Yu Baek-Song were the same age.

“It’s going to be fine. We are going to see each other again so you don’t have to be like this, you know?” (Sae-Jin)

Thinking that maybe she didn’t want to part from him, Sae-Jin tried to speak to Yu Baek-Song while patting her head.

Almost immediately, flames lit up in Hazeline’s eyes, but unaware of this development, Yu Baek-Song slightly shook her head and shyly spoke up.

“No, that’s not it...” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Eh? Please say what you need.” (Sae-Jin)

“...You said, that, you’ll, give it to me, that thing...” (Yu Baek-Song)

However, Yu Baek-Song couldn’t finish what she wanted to say and simply overloaded herself. Just what was she trying to say to him?

Looking at her crimson-red blushing face, Sae-Jin smiled in deep happiness.

“Ex, cu, se, me. I asked you what you are doing?!” (Hazeline)

Hazeline’s voice were full of thorns now. Yu Baek-Song got pressured by this and finally spat out what she wanted to say.

“Your smell. You said you’ll let me smell it even when you’re not around... you said you’ll gimme a handkerchief...” (Yu Baek-Song)

“.....Ah.”

Sae-Jin understood only then. For sure, he did say something similar to that a few weeks ago. Well, he did prepare a handkerchief but hadn’t yet given to her, since he



didn't want to be an afterthought from that point onwards...

"Of course, I've got it." (Sae-Jin)

Reluctantly, Sae-Jin extracted a handkerchief out from his back pocket. Created with the aid of the Magic Tattoo Skill, it was a piece of cloth where the smell of the Wolf was deeply embedded in.

"...Thanks!!"

Yu Baek-Song quickly snatched that off his hands and left Sae-Jin's side in a hurry, and ran towards Hazeline in a cute little bouncy steps.

That kinda felt slightly dejecting.

It seemed that, this body of Kim Sae-Jin was simply an ancillary existence to Yu Baek-Song. Only his body odour mattered...

"...What is that?" (Hazeline)

"Sae-Jin's smell is on it." (Yu Baek-Song)

"...Give that here." (Hazeline)

Sae-Jin overheard their conversation and smirked slightly.

"Don't wanna." (Yu Baek-Song)

"Why not? Friends are supposed to share, you know? So, let me hold it at least once." (Hazeline)

"Get lost." (Yu Baek-Song)

"...W, what?! What did you just say?" (Hazeline)

Not too long after, the door to the isolation barrier chamber slammed shut.

Only thing remaining was silence.

Sitting alone on a couch that possessed the faint aroma of people, Sae-Jin was

overcome with a certain sense of loneliness, but he still managed to stand up from his spot.

# Chapter 139

## A Curious Occurrence (1)

Yu Sae-Jung was waiting for him when Kim Sae-Jin returned home.

Although her face was awash with discontentment, Sae-Jin felt this was rather fortunate. He was worried that she might be still stuck at the Knights Order.

“Oppa, just what’s going on with you right now?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

With her arms crossed, she bluntly spat out her words as soon as she saw his face. He simply smiled and replied.

“Just this and that. But today was the last day. I’m all done with it. From now on, I’m going to spend the holidays with you.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Really?”

It seemed that her anger had cooled down a bit. A sigh of relief automatically escaped from his lips. Too bad, that ill-timed sigh ended up reigniting her fuse once more.

“I’m still angry at you, you know? Oppa, do you have any idea how many times this month alone you spent the night outside without telling me?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“...My bad.”

Muttering his apology, Sae-Jin hugged Yu Sae-Jung tightly. She shouted “Don’t you even think about glossing over this with only this much!!” and continued to throw a tantrum, but he didn’t let go. Three minutes or so later, she grew much more quieter.

“.....Oppa?”

“Mm?”

Yu Sae-Jung’s voice tickling his ears was thick with worries. Was this the so-called woman’s intuition? He did his best to maintain a calm face and answered her, but the

worries in her trembling voice still remained palpable.

“You’re not cheating on me, right?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“..”

Yes, it was called an ‘intuition’ since it could indeed get stuff very wrong. When he looked at her with a somewhat dazed face, she quickly added something else with even more worries in her voice.

“If, if you’re seeing someone else... just, just don’t get found out, okay?”

What on earth was she even saying? Sae-Jin groaned out deeply and lightly stomped on her forehead with his fist.

“Euh-aht!”

A cute cry resounded out.

“You see, there are lots of women who seemed to like me out there.” (Sae-Jin)

He jokingly bragged while pulling her close back into his arms.

“...You should be oh-so proud of yourself, then.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Her grumpy voice leaked out from within his embrace.

“.....”

“What’s the matter? Why aren’t you saying anything? Lots of women like Oppa, so what next?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“That’s just it. The only one I like is you.” (Sae-Jin)

He had spend a long time in the same space with her. He had grown so accustomed to Yu Sae-Jung; she had become someone he just could not imagine not having in his life anymore.

“...What the heck. Is that all?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung playfully narrowed her eyes and began pinching both of his cheeks.

“Les’s ghewt mawwied.”

His words became garbled because of that, but he could still transmit what he wanted to say to her.

She stopped pinching his cheeks and lowered her hands, her face completely dumbstruck.

“Maybe not right now, maybe not this year, maybe not next year, but... definitely. When we can marry without any worries then...” (Sae-Jin)

*Slap!!!!*

One of his cheek experienced a stinging pain right then.

“Eek!! Hey, what was that for?!” (Sae-Jin)

“Ho, how can you say something like that in this kind of a situation!! You, you idiot!!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

She began shouting at him while tears formed in her eyes.

“Seriously, just what kinda proposal is this...” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Uh?! Ah... Oh, uh, yeah, uhm, this isn’t a proposal, you see? No, hang on, yeah, it is a proposal in a way. It’s like, I’m proposing to you that I’ll make a proper proposal...” (Sae-Jin)

“You’re noisy!! Outta my way!!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung pushed him aside and stomped her way into the kitchen. It seemed that she was royally pissed off right now, but thankfully, her voice coming out from the kitchen seemed to indicate otherwise.

“Oppa, you hungry? There’s some leftover cake, would you like some?”



Late at night, on the day of the Christmas.

As soon as the short-ish meeting with Yu Sae-Jung was over, Kim Sae-Jin headed off to the East Sea. After transforming into the Leviathan, he began swimming in the ocean with only his head peeking out of the ocean's surface. This was in order to ensure that Bathory wouldn't lose interest or run away after seeing his new body that had grown three times the previous size.

Eerie winds blew, and even the calm sounds of the waves felt rather ominous, yet Sae-Jin wasn't worried. This was in the middle of the ocean. He didn't have anything to fear here.

And as he sliced through the waters...

He sensed the *cold* presence of a certain someone.

He knew who it could be without using his eyes to confirm. However, Sae-Jin maintained his poker face and continued to swim, towards where Lillia's isolation barrier was located at.

He picked up the faint movement following him from behind. Sae-Jin swam leisurely and swam towards the trap set for the target.

The location of the isolation barrier trap was set in a triangular formation with three small, uninhabited rocky islands acting as the three vertices. While eagerly waiting for the Bathory woman to follow him, Sae-Jin faithfully moved towards the centre of the formation.

And then...

Just as he arrived at the destination.

A red whirlwind broke out in the air.

The whirlwind grew in ferocity and size, violently whipping the water around before it all came to a sudden halt.

The crimson winds died down and the ocean's turbulent waves also calmed down.

And when the crimson winds blocking the view dissipated, a stunningly beautiful woman carrying a seductive smile revealed her graceful self.

It was none other than Prillani von Bathory.

“Hi~?”

Bathory greeted the Azure Dragon, and behind her, Rhosrahdell could be seen, smiling deeply in satisfaction. Sae-Jin the Leviathan too assumed a thick smile as well.

“Oh, my. Oh my!! Is he smiling at me right now?” (Bathory)

Bathory raised a fuss after spotting the curved lips of the ‘Azure Dragon’.

“Yes, my Lady. I think you’re right.”

“Right? Doesn’t it look like it likes me?” (Bathory)

Rhosrahdell enthusiastically agreed with her. Unfortunately, Bathory couldn’t maintain her happy mood for long.

Immediately, From the bottom of the ocean, Mana began boiling like crazy, then it rose up along with the water and encased all three of them in a dome-shaped barrier.

“Mm...? Hey, kid, what is this?” (Bathory)

“I’m not sure either... Could it be, one of the Azure Dragon’s abilities...?”

“Is that so? By the way, why are you going over to that side?” (Bathory)

Bathory tried her best to maintain a smile as she looked at Rhosrahdell. He had already taken refuge behind the Azure Dragon by then.

*\*SFX for things popping out from magic circles. I think.\**

Soon afterwards, teleportation magic circles hidden within the barrier activated and many silhouettes emerged from there. These were Wizards wearing jet-black robes, already finished with their chantings to fire off high-level magic spells at any time.

Bathory panicked for a brief moment, before breaking out in another smile as she

opened her mouth.

“...Nosferatus. So, it was you b\*stards. I guessed as much. Inferior breeds are unable to coexist in harmony with the purebloods, after all.”

Bathory sneered in contempt and wielded Mana stored in every part of her body.

No, she tried to.

However, Mana didn't move an inch. It was as if her blood vessels had all been blocked up.

Finally realising the urgency of the situation, she hurriedly searched for the one responsible for this strange magic. But every one of them were wearing the identical black robe and it was impossible to tell them apart.

“You no-good sons of bi\*ches...!!”

Thoroughly enraged by now, Bathory unconsciously rushed forward. She didn't need things like Mana. No, with the constitution of Bathory, that unbelievably powerful physical body alone would be enough to sweep away these uncouth rabble of inferior breeds...

*CLANG!!*

However, a weighty greatsword appeared seemingly out of nowhere and blocked her progress. It was Joo Ji-Hyuk's doing. He did succeed in delaying her for around two seconds, but...

“Get lost!!”

...But, he was unable to completely withstand her angry attacks.

*KWAHANG!!*

The greatsword was powerlessly shoved away and Joo Ji-Hyuk was flung away to the corner of the barrier like a ragdoll.

But, Joo Ji-Hyuk wasn't the only Knight here. Past the head of the flying Joo Ji-Hyuk, a sharp sword aura slithered forward like a snake and sliced a couple strands of



Bathory's hair.

*\*SFX for falling hair\**

Red strands of hair fell to the bottom of the isolation barrier.

Unconsciously stepping back a couple of times, Bathory confirmed her faintly damaged hair, and roared out to the high heavens in pure rage.

[...Kobac Grohack!!]

Bathory shouted out some undecipherable words and was about to rush towards Yi Hye-Rin's direction.

But then, countless magic spells rained down on her position.

Dark red flashes of light beams, spheres of condensed destructive power, curses filled to the brim with resentment – at this hail storm of approaching spells, even Bathory had no choice but to stop what she was trying to do.

*\*SFX for a loud sweeping sound\**

The combined might of the spells were incredible enough to scar the isolation barrier semi-permanently, and the shock wave coming off from the resulting explosion was harsh enough to make all the listeners bleed from their ears.

However, there was one more attack that could easily be described as a sure-kill still left to be unleashed.

And that was the 'Mana cannon' busy gathering in the Azure Dragon's maws.

This was the finishing move that Sae-Jin learned after ingesting the adult Leviathan's scale. It was the true one-hit kill Skill where he gathered every bit of Mana from both his body as well as from the ocean around him, to fire out and annihilate the enemy in front.

No matter who or what the target was, all things would 'disappear' without a trace when struck by this Mana cannon. Didn't matter the shape or form of the physical body, elemental preference, Traits, whatever.

Even 'light' was not spared. Within the path where the Mana cannon swept past, darkness dyed the world black.

That was why, not even Bathory herself could survive this devastating attack.

“...!!”

However – less than ten seconds after the battle broke out.

One of the Wizards wearing the black robe suddenly collapsed.

And at the same time, at the location where the magic spells from the Wizards were raining down, a powerful Mana rose up like an ascending dragon.

Bathory was in the middle of emitting the dense, red-coloured Mana to her surroundings, while her melted down skin and maimed limbs were rapidly recovering by themselves.

“Stop her!!”

Someone shouted out, prompting Yi Hye-Rin, Yu Baek-Song and Rejen to step forward at the same time. But, Yi Hye-Rin's Mana dissipated powerlessly the moment it came in contact with Bathory, and instead, a blood-red whip slammed into Hye-Rin's chest. She got squarely hit and spat out a mouthful of blood, before collapsing helplessly.

“ROAR-!!”

Yu Baek-Song transformed into the divine beast and rushed in. The Giant White Tiger swung its front paw hard. Bathory simply blocked it with only an arm and fired off a light beam at the side of the tiger.

At the same time, Rejen emerged from under the body of the White Tiger and her blade pierced deep into Bathory's heart.

“Euck!!”

Bathory quickly reorganised her Mana and slashed at Rejen's arms, but then...

*KHANG!!*

The front paw of the White Tiger slammed into her head, hard.

“...That hurts, you know?” (Bathory)

Unfortunately, Bathory didn't die. No, she instead carried a leisurely smile as she grabbed the neck of the tiger.

*Gheeeuhhh...*

The White Tiger was clearly in distress, yet it continued to punch Bathory's head. But the future Vampire queen showed no adverse reaction, only her grip on the tiger's throat was getting tighter and tighter.

It was then.

“Get out of the way!!”

20 seconds had passed in total.

A time way too long in the context of this battle flew past, but by then, the Mana cannon was fully charged. Lillia loudly shouted out at the same time. Yu Baek-Song quickly cancelled the transformation and retreated to a safe distance.

Almost immediately, a huge and massive white ray of light engulfed Bathory.

Afterwards...

One might have gotten confused that even the sound was eradicated within the isolation barrier.

The sounds of breathing, sounds of swallowing saliva, none of them could be heard.

Everyone stared dumbfoundedly at the space where the Mana cannon swept by. Would the world look like this if it was burnt black? They all stood there and 'appreciatively' gazed at the unnatural darkness etched on to the world – until an urgent cry shattered this silence.

“Wait!! The finger!!”

Lillia hurriedly fired a Mana Spear at a stump of a finger rolling around on the bottom

of the barrier.

But alas, it was too late.

That small finger violently expelled the red Mana and blocked the enemy's attack, and then, rapidly regenerated into...

"...Well, I died four times because of a strange magic." (Bathory)

...The finger fully regenerated into Bathory. While cracking her joints, she took a look around at her opponents.

"You guys, I guess you have a close relationship with my Yong-Yong, huh?" (Bathory)

Bathory spoke as she stared down at her enemies.

She died a total of five times today. She so wanted to rip apart every single one of these mongrels here, but if she got killed one more time, then that would be the end for her. Considering that she also needed to tear apart this stupid barrier, quite regrettably she no longer had the spare capacity to handle the additional danger.

Also... Yong-Yong was busy sucking up endless Mana from the ocean right at this moment. If she dallied any longer, it might fire off that outrageous beam attack again.

"Oh well... it doesn't matter, really. I really enjoy taking away things from others, you see." (Bathory)

While holding her side that hadn't fully regenerated yet, Bathory fired off a magic bullet that was comprised of condensed and uber-intense flames at the isolation barrier's wall. What with the Mana reserve of the Wizards maintaining the barrier falling quite low, a magic bullet the size of a baseball could easily pierce a gap in the barrier.

The complexions of the Wizards turned ashen.

Bathory didn't have time to waste here. She immediately rushed towards the Leviathan, and grabbed its neck tightly.

And then...

*Puff!!*

...She disappeared, along with her catch.

That was a spell where chanting nor a magic circle was needed. This was way past the boundaries of normal magic – the so-called ‘instant transmission’.

“.....Huh?!”

The thought processes of everyone present stopped dead in their tracks.

What happened just now? They even found this hard to figure out.

Even after the isolation barrier shattered into nothingness, not one of them could say a single word for a long, long while.

# Chapter 140

## A Curious Occurrence (2)

It was an incredibly unpleasant and uncomfortable sensation when Sae-Jin's body went through 'changes' during the instant transmission. After experiencing the unpleasantness of his entire body breaking down to molecular level, and then getting rebuilt in a flash, Sae-Jin staggered as he opened his eyes.

He found himself trapped inside this oppressively dark space, and right away, spotted Bathory keeled over on the ground not too far, busy vomiting out mouthful of blood.

The first thing he thought of was "Is this another chance?"

Unfortunately though – the Mana cannon was a one-hit-kill attack that sucked up every drop of Mana from inside his body as well as from the outside. Regrettably, he didn't have much Mana left within him.

*\*SFX for vomit. Yuck.\**

Bathory made uncool noises as she continued to vomit out blood. However, Sae-Jin already understood that her actions were actually a part of the recovery process, where she expelled dead blood out of her body to replace it with fresh one instead. It was one of the bits of knowledge he gained after ingesting the scale of the adult Leviathan.

However, he had no idea why the knowledge about Vampires were recorded within the scale, though.

Whatever the case may have been, he couldn't help but worry about the near future when her pain would be replaced by her fury.

Since he heard that Bathory liked torturing people, there were more reasons now to spin his brain faster than ever before.

It was then, he recalled a certain Skill called the 'Dark Energy Link'. This Skill received a few additional upgrades when he 'evolved', so its usefulness had increased by a great

deal.

And among these new additions, the bits of text gleaming quite nicely within Sae-Jin's recollection were as thus:

[Dark Energy Link]

- Not only emotions such as 'Fear' and 'Terror', but even physical sensations such as 'Pain' and 'Pleasure' can be used to form the Link.
- However, when the Link is formed with sensation as the medium, while the experienced sensation will be shared, no other functions will manifest.

Obviously, a Link of submission formed with fear and terror would not work against a bigshot like Bathory. On the flip side, though – the Link formed with 'sensation' could be a possibility. Plus, she was currently experiencing acute pain right now.

However, no matter how strong the Leviathan Form was compared to his other Forms, the Dark Energy Link was a Skill he needed to use in the Lycanthrope Form to bring about the best results. But, for now, he maintained the Leviathan Form and sneaked in closer to Bathory's position.

"You shouldn't waste your time, darling. You can't hurt me. We are not in the ocean anymo... *Bleurgh.*"

While listening to her chilly declaration and the follow-up noise of retching, Sae-Jin cautiously activated the Eyes of the Wolf. He could sort of see a 'shadow' of pain hovering near her back. But he found out that, as a Leviathan, he couldn't pull that energy towards him and form a link.

He closed his eyes. He told himself that he only needed to succeed once.

Now normally, those who enjoyed being cruel towards others would not be able to adjust to being treated cruelly in return – most of the time.

The body of the Leviathan began to shrink before anyone could notice it.

The head of the dragon changed to a shape of a person's, while the shrinking body morphed into one with four limbs. Shoulders broad enough to seemingly carry five grown men's heads without a problem, and slick, tightly packed muscles rippling in his arms. And, the wild, macho silvery fur that warmly covered that rock-hard body...

He changed into the Lycanthrope.

Now that he looked through this beast's eyes, the dark energy hovering on top of the woman was far more distinct and clearer.

The only strand of energy he could touch right now was 'pain'. So, Sae-Jin extended his finger and beckoned the link for 'pain' to come closer. That energy strand tightly wound around his finger. Sae-Jin cautiously studied this, before...

*Kwack!!*

He grabbed the energy and shoved it down his throat.

Immediately, Bathory's eyes shifted towards his direction, and at the same time, several alert windows popped up into his view.

[The Dark Energy Link has been established against an overwhelmingly powerful existence!] [Condition complete: Swallow the Heavens (1/2)] [All Stats for the Lycanthrope Form will increase by a large margin!] [The Lycanthrope Form's unique Skill, 'Senses of a Wolf' has been acquired!] [When the last condition is met, the Lycanthrope Form will evolve into the final stage.]

His muscles and bones issued cracking noises as the body of the Lycanthrope began rapidly increasing in its size. Bathory completely turned around after sensing the disturbing presence, and when she saw him, she completely lost her sh\*t.

"&^%#!!! What the hell!! Who the f\*ck are you, you disgusting scum?!"

She violently swung her arms around. Sae-Jin belatedly raised his arms to block her, but the power behind her wild swings totally transcended his imagination. Bones in his arms shattered into smithereens, and the shock wave slammed into his innards,



blowing up several internal organs.

It was such a nonsensically powerful attack, had he been a normal person, he would have died instantly.

Fortunately enough, that pain was shared with her, too. And no, it wasn't some sympathetic sharing of pain – instead, she would feel the full brunt of the physical pain Sae-Jin experienced in that moment.

That was why it should be considered *normal* to see her screaming her lungs out in a high pitched tone.

“Kkyaaaaaaahck!!!!”

Bathory screamed and collapsed on the ground. From now on, it was a battle of recuperative powers and endurance between the two. Who could recover faster, and who could endure more pain?

Sae-Jin was feeling confident of his odds. After all, the Lycanthropes of the legends were often called the ‘race of immortal youth’ thanks to the vitality and regenerative powers that far outstripped other races. And on top of this, he had over 100 healing and recovery potions ‘Spiritualised’ and stored within his body right at this moment, as well.

Some people might call all the preparations he did simply excessive, but the very notion of that being ‘bad’ was utter garbage. The more, the better. Anytime.

[*Kobhack!!*]

Completely recovering in the blink of an eye, Bathory spat out a word that kind of sounded like a curse word while reaching out towards Sae-Jin's direction.

And so, the chain of one-sided beating and mutual sharing of resulting pain, began in earnest.



The secret conference room was shrouded in a heavy atmosphere. Everyone present carried somber expressions and spoke not a word. Without a doubt, their plan failed. Of course, it was still somewhat more palatable result than being wiped out.

But, no one dared to raise this point. The importance of the person kidnapped was just too high for that.

*\*SFX for the second hand of the clock ticking away\**

The heavy silence, where only the ticking of the second hand could be heard, finally got broken by the alarm tone coming off from someone's mobile phone.

Kim Sun-Ho hesitatingly pulled out his phone, and after checking out the message on the screen, let out a long sigh.

"...Well, it's from Miss Yu Sae-Jung. What should I do?"

At the same time, several sighs also leaked out.

And as everyone here were wondering how to reply to Yu Sae-Jung, Yu Baek-Song stepped up with a serious face.

"We keep everything as a secret from Yu Sae-Jung." (Yu Baek-Song)

".....After hiding the truth, and then what?" (Hazeline)

Hazeline asked, her voice trembling heavily. She cried her eyes out so much, they were all puffed up beyond recognition.

"As long as Kim Sae-Jin remains as a Leviathan, he won't die. All we have to do is rescue him." (Yu Baek-Song)

"With us alone?" (Hazeline)

"With other people, too." (Yu Baek-Song)

"No, wait. You, listen here..." (Hazeline)

Hazeline wanted to say something to counter her, but in the end, she became overcome with emotions and buried her face on the table once more. The sound of her soft sobbing seemed to blanket the silent conference room.

"...Stop crying, you idiot. The news of the Azure Dragon being kidnapped will be enough. Koreans love the Azure Dragon, after all. When we break the news that the

Vampires have kidnapped the Azure Dragon, they will help us. Yup, I'm sure of it."

Said Yu Baek-Song, as she gently stroked Hazeline's head. It was a somewhat funny scene where a shorty that looked like a middle schooler was busy consoling a full-grown adult, but not one person here laughed at that.

"What do you think, Lillia? About my plan?" (Yu Baek-Song)

– *"If all the Highest Tier Knights in the country volunteer to help, then we might have a chance, but under the current circumstance, the odds of it happening are quite slim."*

Boss Monsters were still raising a ruckus all over the world even now. The frequency of their appearances had increased by so much, one popped up almost every other week. Thanks to this, there were more than a few frontlines set up to confront the Monsters.

However, to snatch away the services of Highest Tier Knights under this kind of situation? It would be akin to setting the storehouse on fire just to catch a lice.

– *"And also, seeing that Bathory hadn't returned to the hotel, it is likely that she has settled down elsewhere."*

"....."

Another heavy silence descended on the room. They tried their best to come up with something, but couldn't think of anything useful.

The only thing still flowing freely within this silence was the ceaseless sobbing coming from Hazeline.



Inside the jet-black interior.

It was impossible to tell whether this was inside some kind of a closed-off space, or the luxury hotel Bathory was staying. But it really didn't matter either way. Because of all the blood coating pretty much everywhere, this whole place looked too gruesome to look, anyway.

[Gaom croshack!!]

Sae-Jin heard a queer speech coming from somewhere. When he turned to look, he spotted Bathory lying on the floor, just like him, busy glaring at him with bloodshot eyes. So, so much crazy killing intent contained within her glare.

“Speak in Korean. I can’t understand you.” (Sae-Jin)

He leisurely laughed and replied to her. The coincidental level up meant that, the only way to break the now-more powerful Dark Energy Link was for the owner – him – to personally sever the connection. No matter how many times she hit him, nothing would change.

“My Yong-Yong... You dirty, scummy canine b\*stard, you dare to trick me?” (Bathory)

“And just what did I trick you with?” (Sae-Jin)

Bathory grit her teeth in anger. But she didn’t do anything else besides. She was probably exhausted as well.

“...Well, it doesn’t matter. In any case, as soon as I fully recover, you’re a dead meat.” (Bathory)

Bathory spoke with a manufactured smile on her face.

“Fuht. You think I’ll let you?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin sneered and slashed at her face with his claws.

Thanks to his lucky level up, his claws were much stronger now. Their hardness could exceed that of the earth’s greatest metal, mithril. So, at a bare minimum, they should be able to inflict some sort of damage to the clearly-weakened Bathory.

*\*SFX for wounds inflicted. I think.\**

Four claw lines slashed out at an oblique angle.

“Kkhyack!!”

She screamed out at this unexpected attack and rolled around the floor in pain. However, he didn’t feel a thing. Well, the thing was, this Dark Energy Link came with a certain convenient feature that benefited the owner, somewhat.

In a way, it was like, ‘what’s yours is yours, and what’s mine is mine’, that kinda thing.

That’s why, he needed to continuously torment her. To make sure that she would never recover her vitality, and that she wouldn’t be able to endure any longer and let him go.

“You son of a bi\*ch!!”

Bathory screamed out a couple of choice words and kicked Sae-Jin in the side. His ribs shattered from the impact, but that also meant Bathory’s were also shattered, too.

“Ah, argh, eu-ah-ahrng...” (Bathory)

“Stop doing things that will be painful for both of us.”

Sae-Jin quickly recovered thanks to the effects of potions, and began taunting her. Her eyes snapped wide open and shouted at him.

“You shut up!!” (Bathory)

“Hmph. I should pay you back for your rude words.”

Strictly speaking, he didn’t learn this attack to use in moments like this, but whatever – he decided to use the ‘Lightning Chain Claw’. Immediately, purple-coloured arcs of electricity buzzed and circulated around his extended claws. Bathory saw this and her entire body trembled imperceptibly.

“You!! You better stop!! I said, stop!!! I’m warning you!! A warni... *\*Bzzzzzzzz\**...”

He ignored her and slashed at her entire torso. Even though her body was shaking from the pain of the electricity, she didn’t submit to it and thrust forward her hand into Sae-Jin’s heart.

...Without the regenerative potions, he’d have probably died three times over by now.

His sight blurred and his consciousness darkened.

When he reopened his eyes after losing his consciousness for a brief second or two, he spotted Bathory next to him, weaving in and out of slumber herself.

“*Ha-ah, ha-ah...*” (Bathory)

He stealthily approached her and stabbed his claw into her neck.

“Eiii, you f\*cking...” (Bathory)

Her eyes snapped open, and with an expression that said she had enough of this sh\*t, she shoved her fingers into Sae-Jin’s eye sockets.

“Just die already, you scummy son of a bi\*ch!!” (Bathory)

“You first.” (Sae-Jin)



In the end, a cease-fire occurred between him and Bathory. He told her to release him, but she resolutely refused to do so. She said that, she would keep him around until she found a way to exterminate him.

And so, a curious co-habitation begun.

The place was an empty, isolated space probably maintained by Bathory herself. Trapped within, both of them didn’t eat anything nor did anything. Except, for the childish tauntings thrown at each other’s way.

“You hungry now? You moron. You see, I’m the perfect Vampire, so I only need to eat something once a year and that’s all, you know?” (Bathory)

“I can rip off your arm and snack on that, so it’s fine.” (Sae-Jin)

“Who says I’ll let you snack on me?!” (Bathory)

Thanks to the Dark Energy Link, Bathory couldn’t kill him. If she wounded him fatally, then that damage would transmit in full towards her as well. However, in case of something going wrong, he had to prevent her from using a magic spell that might exceed his Skill, so he needed to constantly hurt her.

“.....Fuu.”

Bathory groaned out a lengthy sigh and got up. He extended his claws and slashed at her back and her waist. Deep, horrendous wounds opened up, and she fell back down on the ground once more.

“Ah-euhck!! Hey, you crazy b\*stard!!” (Bathory)

“I’m telling you, it’ll be better for you to release me now. What do you think will happen when my friends show up? Will you be able to fight them off in your current condition?” (Sae-Jin)

“Shut up!!”

Instead of a proper answer, Bathory fed him a knuckle sandwich to his face.

# Chapter 141

## A Curious Occurrence (3)

Yi Hye-Rin and Joo Ji-Hyuk went to the East Sea – or, more specifically, to a small hut located inside a forest near the East Sea.

The salty scent blowing inland by the calm waves was gently permeating the land, and the rays of the sun high up in the sky shining down got broken into a beautiful cascade by the gaps of leaves on trees.

Within this brilliant verdant landscape, *her* hut silently stood still.

“If we’re to value the land according to the view, this place should easily fetch over \$90 million, don’t you think?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin glanced at Joo Ji-Hyuk and asked him.

“Probably.” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Just like how he was during the last 30 minutes of hiking, his answer proved to be no fun at all. It was so dry and indifferent.

Yi Hye-Rin clicked her tongue in dissatisfaction, and increased her walking pace towards the hut. Joo Ji-Hyuk silently followed her.

“Should I knock?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Joo Ji-Hyuk nodded wordlessly. Seeing his especially stone-hard expressions of today, she was getting more and more annoyed but right now, the circumstances meant that she couldn’t express her disappointment. So, Yi Hye-Rin glared at him fiercely once instead, and then cautiously knocked on the door.

*Knock, knock*

Winds rustled past the silent forest, causing the branches to issue a slightly sorrowful wail. Did *she* not hear the knocking, because of the cries of the trees?



Yi Hye-Rin knocked on the door again. Only then, she could sense a faint sense of movement behind the door.

Soon after, *click*. A lock that wouldn't have mattered if it wasn't there, unlatched.

"Who is... oh, Hye-Rin? Even Knight Joo Ji-Hyuk, too?"

Was it because of the blinding sunshine? A woman so beautiful, that even the fellow woman Yi Hye-Rin couldn't help but blush, revealed herself.

Underneath her hair cascading like a curtain of silk, her intricate facial features seem to shine brightly. Elegantly-carved lips, eyes that seemed to have somewhat mellowed greatly, straight and perfectly defined nose, plus the pure and pale-smooth skin – her beauty was enough to cause a serious confusion on figuring out whether she was an Elf or a human being.

"What brings you guys here?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"....." (Yi Hye-Rin & Joo Ji-Hyuk)

A clean and pure echo, created by a masterpiece of a neck – even her voice sounded stunningly beautiful.

Yi Hye-Rin stared at Kim Yu-Rin dazedly for a long while, before her head snapped to her side, out of the blue. And as she suspected, Joo Ji-Hyuk was standing there, his mouth agape.

"Pretending to be serious and all that, and now, you...!!" (Yi Hye-Rin)

Anger rushed up and took over; Yi Hye-Rin slammed her fist right in the middle of Joo Ji-Hyuk's solar plexus. From the gaping mouth of Joo Ji-Hyuk, an unidentifiable liquid that could either be his spit or blood dribbled out.



Yi Hye-Rin and Joo Ji-Hyuk moved on from that small commotion and entered the hut.

It wasn't spacious inside, but there was this sense of cozy snugness and a certain affection present to this place. Yi Hye-Rin smiled gently and surveyed the interior for a bit, before finding a bunch of stuff that weren't there before taking up space here and

there.

And they were... cute stuffed dolls.

There was a doll of Athany, a doll of a certain white bird resembling the Korean crow-tit, a doll of the Azure Dragon... and finally, even a doll that kinda, sorta looked like an Orc. And the doll that was suspected to be replica of the Orc took up the best location of them all, right above Kim Yu-Rin's bed.

"Wha, what are you doing? Please, hurry and come in and don't look at the weird stuff."  
(Kim Yu-Rin)

Becoming embarrassed all of a sudden, Kim Yu-Rin dragged the two of them towards a small coffee table. There were only two chairs here; Yu-Rin settled down on the corner of the bed, while Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yi Hye-Rin took up the available chairs.

"Have you guys eaten yet?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"No, not ye..." (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

"Yeah, we ate before coming here." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin hastily covered the tactless Joo Ji-Hyuk's mouth and replied in his stead.

"Oh, really? Then, what about a cup of tea?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"We don't need tea either, Captain." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin placed an emphasis on the word 'Captain' as she replied. Kim Yu-Rin assumed a faint smile.

"When are you coming back? It's been too long a break for a post-op trauma, you know." (Yi Hye-Rin)

The very first vacation Kim Yu-Rin went on in ten years of her career was already almost half a year long now. And, what with the justification of 'recovering from the after-effects of a medical procedure' added on top, all the higher ups of the Raven Knights Order could do was to impatiently stomp on their feet and wait.

No, it wasn't just the Raven Order, but the entire country was stomping on their feet

as well.

“...Sorry. Please wait for a little bit longer. I’d like to enjoy it for a while longer, this vacation I’ve never had before.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Her will was gentle, yet unyielding. Yi Hye-Rin spat out a long sigh and took a look around the interior of the hut once more.

“Just what exactly are you doing here all alone? Sure, the view looks great, but it’s not like you can stare at the nature all the time, right?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Fuhut, does it look like that? However, there are more things to do here than you think.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin’s eyes gently arched. Yi Hye-Rin complained in her heart that such enticingly smiling eyes were an infringement of rules, and took a quick glance at Joo Ji-Hyuk. Instead of his mouth, his eyes were wide open this time.

“I can go out fishing, read a book in comfort, and even meditate to gain clarity on things I failed to realise before. Probably, my Trait could have gone up a level like this?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“ ... ”

Yi Hye-Rin wordlessly glared at Kim Yu-Rin, then her gaze drifted towards a small stuffed doll of a wolf lying on top of the coffee table. It was a seriously adorable little thing. But besides that fatally attractive cuteness, a faint aura coming off it caused a slight desire to possess it to settle on a small corner of her mind.

“Heu, hmm.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

As if she got worried about Yi Hye-Rin asking for it, Kim Yu-Rin stealthily hugged the doll and bashfully came up with excuses for her action.

“...All the dolls in here, the Guild Master Kim Sae-Jin brought along as presents, you know. He said that it’s because I might get bored vacationing alone. I definitely didn’t buy them, you see. T, that is why, I can’t give them to anyone else. If I do, it’d be like I’m not taking his good intentions seriously...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin spoke these words since, in actuality, she didn’t want to give them away

anyways.

However, at the same time those words left her mouth, both of her guests froze up stiff.

After all, Kim Sae-Jin had been kidnapped. By a nonsensically powerful being no less, and his current whereabouts were completely unknown.

Kim Yu-Rin's eyes widened at this sudden change in the atmosphere and she quickly looked at both of them.

"What? What's the matter... Can it be?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

With tears forming in her eyes, Yi Hye-Rin dropped her head, Joo Ji-Hyuk gritted his teeth and stared off into the distance instead.

"Did something happen to him?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin stood up from her spot with a surprised face.

Two of them was unable to say anything for a while. After all, Sae-Jin's Trait was a big secret. However, in order to persuade Kim Yu-Rin, the secret had to come out in the open.

"What, what happened?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin hurriedly asked again. Yi Hye-Rin sighed out softly and studied Joo Ji-Hyuk's mood for a bit. He nodded his head once.

"Fuu... Okay, please listen closely, Captain. Actually, the Guild Master's Trait is... he can transform into a Monster." (Yi Hye-Rin)

".....What?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Immediately, Kim Yu-Rin's expression blanked out. But before long, the shock of this revelation quickly reassembled all the information percolating in her brain.

And well, a look of shock even greater than before lit up on her face.

A Trait where a person could turn into a Monster. And then, the Hero Orc and Kim Sae-

Jin.

In that case, could it be...

And as her mouth continued to open and shut like a goldfish, unable to swim out from the enormous shock...

“What do you mean, a Monster? It’s the Azure Dragon.” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Joo Ji-Hyuk’s words brought a temporary relief to Kim Yu-Rin’s mind currently being ravaged by the shock waves.

“Ah, you’re right. The Azure Dragon isn’t a Monster.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“The A, Azure Dragon...? Not an Orc?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin dazedly asked back.

“That’s correct. Mister Sae-Jin can transform into the Azure Dragon. But what do you mean by the Orc? You’re still thinking about that guy?!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Ah... No, no. It’s, it’s nothing.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin replied while carrying a bitter smile.

And Kim Yu-Rin dazedly nodded her head, while feeling a conflicting emotion that she couldn’t distinguish whether it was relief or frustration.



=====

[THE MONSTER]

We’d like to cordially extend our invitation towards you for the greatest party to be held by The Monster.

The Vice President of the Great Wisdom Investments, Kim Jong-Hyuk-*nim*, we sincerely hope that you can attend and brighten the party with your presence.

=====

“I think this should be enough, right? Oi, I sent out the invitation to all the celebs as you told me to. Is that cool?” (Yu Baek-Song)

When Yu Baek-Song asked while studying the invitation card, Rhosrahdel nodded his head. As an aside, as he was working as a double agent until now, he no longer had a place to return to anymore, so he decided to completely to stick to this group of people.

“Yes. Currently, there is an Elder assigned to Kim Jong-Hyuk, so the odds of that Elder accompanying Jong-Hyuk to the party is very good. After all, there will be plenty of juicy, fat prey to be taken under the mind control spells in a high-society party held by The Monster.” (Rhosrahdel)

“So, then, we catch that Elder and make him sing where Bathory woman is hiding, is that it?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“That’s correct. Elders are proficient in hiding their identities so not even the best security equipment can find them, but it should be fine since I’ll be present there as well.” (Rhosrahdel)

“Hmph. Good. I’ll leave it to you.” (Yu Baek-Song)

As soon as Yu Baek-Song finished declaring like a boss, the doors to the underground secret conference room got abruptly pushed open.

It was the pair of Yi Hye-Rin and Joo Ji-Hyuk, who went out earlier while saying they were going to fetch someone. And it seemed that they have succeeded in their quest – there was one more person following the duo.

“We’ve brought along the best reinforcement ever~!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Hearing Yi Hye-Rin’s energetic voice, Hazeline took a glance towards her direction.

And, at the same time, when her eyes met that person’s, Hazeline’s body went rigid in an instant.

It was the same for Kim Yu-Rin as well.



It was only the first day where the inside of the isolation barrier was full of sliced-off flesh bits and coated with mountains of blood; now, this place looked complete opposite of that. It was most likely that Bathory was the so-called clean and neat freak – although this closed-off space was on the small side, as she could modify it to suit her tastes and better reflect her state of mind, now it more or less resembled a high class hotel suite instead.

“A Lycanthrope... Yeah, I’ve heard about your kind before. Seriously, your recovery speed is really annoying.” (Bathory)

Bathory spoke so, her body deeply cocooned within a luxurious sofa. She was wearing a red dress that must’ve had an issue with the amount of materials available during the manufacturing process as it was *dangerously* small, and it also happened to be quite revealing in all the critical areas.

“Whatever. But you... What are you? You also have a Trait? How can you still survive only with a single finger left?” (Sae-Jin)

“Hmm... Are you curious?” (Bathory)

Bathory slowly traced her lips with her fingers. It was a needlessly seductive gesture.

“You’ll tell me if I say I am curious?” (Sae-Jin)

“Well, it’s not like I can’t tell you. You’re going to die by my hands soon anyway. Killing you after resolving your curiosity could be seen as me being benevolent, am I right?” (Bathory)

While speaking some confident words, she formed a bright and innocent, child-like smile. It seemed that she was greatly enjoying this situation for some reason.

“Now, pay attention.” (Bathory)

Bathory opened her hand. Red-coloured Mana buzzed on her palm like electricity.

“The Mana of Vampires is red in colour. Because, we tend to ‘use’ Mana and blood at the same. Lower lifeforms can’t do this, of course. To mongrels such as yourself, blood is nothing more than just blood, after all.” (Bathory)

Mana buzzing atop her palm like violent arcs of electricity suddenly coalesced and formed a spike-like shape.

“Vampires pass on their strength via bloodlines. And my bloodline is the most special and excellent among every other bloodline out there. That is why I can use dozens and dozens of ‘sorcery’ spells those cheap Elf Wizards could never perform, and my flesh and bones are several dozen times stronger than even the most powerful Soo-in warriors in the world.” (Bathory)

In a split second, the reddish spike dancing in her palm increased in length and shot towards Sae-Jin’s neck. He ended up swallowing down his saliva unconsciously – the deadly spike had stopped just short of pressing against his Adam’s apple.

“But, the thing that is even more impressive than that, is...” (Bathory)

*Khugugugung!!*

A deafening noise exploded out and at the same time, Mana began boiling all over Bathory’s body. It was like seeing steam rise from the boiling water – her entire body changed into that of pure Mana.

The reddish Mana became a dense fog and slowly drifted towards Sae-Jin, before gradually changing back into the shape of Bathory once more.

“You see, my blood... it’s Mana itself.” (Bathory)

With an elegant smile on her lips, she sensuously stroked Sae-Jin’s cheek and spoke. Seeing how dazed Sae-Jin was after witnessing that dream-like scene, Bathory didn’t stop there and her hand inched further south. From his face, to his neck; from his neck, to his collarbone; and from his collarbone, to his lower abdomen...

“Oi.” (Sae-Jin)

Just as her hand had lowered enough...

The baritone voice of the Wolf heavily descended to her ears.

“What’s the matter? Are you perhaps getting excited...?” (Bathory)

Bathory sneered in contempt as she looked at Sae-Jin’s face.



*Ahgeujack!!*

And at the same time, still in the Lycanthrope Form, Sae-Jin bit into her neck.

“Kkyack!! Seriously?! This stupid son of a bi\*ch!!” (Bathory)

Suffering from the unexpected sneak attack, Bathory powerfully punched his upper torso, and as he flew away from the impact, he inadvertently ended up swallowing bits of her blood and flesh.

“Argh!! *Phew, spit!!*” (Sae-Jin)

“*Groan...* Ouch, that hurts...” (Bathory)

“Argh, that’s some disgusting shi...” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin was opening his mouth to swear like a sailor – but all of a sudden, an alert window popped up into view.

In that moment, his head stopped thinking, and his heart ceased beating altogether.

[The host has ingested the Bathory blood. The Lycanthrope’s unique Skill, ‘Senses of a Wolf’ is activated, and now, the host can gain an understanding of, and acquire, the strength of a Bathory, according to the amount absorbed!]

# Chapter 142

## Rescue (1)

“Ouch... Seriously, this son of a bi\*ch...”

Bathory was rolling around the floor, tears forming on the corners of her eyes. Obviously, she wasn't wounded heavily. She was simply faking it.

“I'll definitely, without a doubt, kill you with my own hands, so you better look forward to it! I'm gonna so rip apart your bones, your muscles, your organs and, and...”  
(Bathory)

Ignoring Bathory's venomous curses, Sae-Jin quickly looked through his Skill windows. Unlike every other Skill he possessed, this new one didn't have a Proficiency Level indicator, just a whole bunch of explanations instead.

[Senses of a Wolf]

– A unique set of senses possessed by only the excellent individuals of Lycanthrope species.

A Lycanthrope who has awakened this ability will see his or her five senses, as well as the 'sixth sense', become extremely perceptive when transformed into the Wolf physique. Can be referred to as the 'transcendental senses', and when certain conditions are met, performing a faint premonition of the future becomes possible.

– Also, by absorbing blood of certain specific targets, it also becomes possible to understand and accept a part of the target's powers. This is the result of the instincts of the Wolf perfectly aligning with the 'transcendental senses', and the more blood the host absorbs, the deeper his understanding will become.

-The current target: Bathory

[Degree of Progression: 0.35%] [Items possible to absorb (understand) currently] – unique structure of the muscles, unbelievably high bone density – [Degree of Advancement: 3%]

Although the two terms with rather similar definition, ‘Degree of Progression’ and ‘Degree of Advancement’, were separated into different categories, it wasn’t all that hard to figure out what was going on.

The former indicated the percentage left until he could absorb every bit of Bathory’s powers, while the latter most likely indicated the percentage left until the parts of her power – in this case, her endurance and strength – were fully absorbed.

And, to increase both the Degrees of Progression and Advancement – in other words, to become stronger – he had to drink Bathory’s blood.

“...Hey, you. You think you can escape from this place alive or something?” (Bathory)

While he was deeply immersed in his thoughts, Bathory sneered at him.

“Obviously.” (Sae-Jin)

He replied full of spirit, but thanks to this new development, thoughts of escaping had vanished, at least for now. There was a mountain of experience points that would never run out right in front of him, after all.

“Truly, what a pitiful idiot.” (Bathory)

Bathory smirked. Sae-Jin glared at her for a while, before throwing a question at her. He was trying to piss her off, and thereby create a situation where he would be able to drink her blood.

“Oh, really? So, you really think you’re all going back to your original home world?” (Sae-Jin)

Her brows furrowed slightly. However, the answer he heard afterwards was way too resolute and at the same time, quite easy-going as well, as if to deny that faint possibility of uncertainty.

“...Of course we are.” (Bathory)

“You too are also a pitiful idiot.” (Sae-Jin)

*Chweeiiiick!!*

In the blink of an eye, Bathory’s Mana flew out in the shape of a spike and stabbed him right in the shoulder. While suffering from this immense pain, a strange scene that could either be the past or the future brushed past his mind.

“Watch... *Keheuck*. You better watch your mouth.” (Bathory)

At the same time, the pain Sae-Jin was going through was shared in full with Bathory as well, but still, while shedding sweat drops, she coldly warned him. Sae-Jin wordlessly stared at her for a bit, before...

“...Yeah, you’re right. Maybe, you can go back.” (Sae-Jin)

...He spoke while recalling the images that had faintly etched within his minds.



Kim Yu-Rin gritted her teeth as she glared at Hazeline. Unfortunately, Hazeline lacked the spare willpower to receive such a gaze, so she lowered her head at an oblique angle.

Between the two, a sharp atmosphere as keen as a prized sword hung about.

And the rest of the members present who didn’t know the full story could only tilt their heads in confusion.

“Wha, what are you doing, Captain?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin hurriedly shook the shoulders of Kim Yu-Rin, who was standing stiff in cold anger as if she was ready to draw her weapon out in the open. However, Kim Yu-Rin didn’t even react to that call, simply glaring at Hazeline and spitting out words filled with rage.

“...Oi.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Everyone present shivered at her tone, filled to the brim with killing intent.

“Look at me.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Hazeline weakly lifted her head up.

At the very moment her face was revealed, Kim Yu-Rin couldn't hold her anger back anymore.

She knew this wasn't the time nor the place. However, how could she hold back her rage when the very enemy who nearly ended her career as a Knight after destroying the paths of her Mana circulation, was right in front of her eyes?

Back then, Kim Yu-Rin definitely gave her a warning after chopping her arm off.

If she appeared once more before Kim Yu-Rin's eyes, then Yu-Rin wouldn't hesitate at all and cut off Hazeline's 'Mana' as well.

“I definitely told you back then, didn't I?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“I know, but... now isn't the right time for us to fight. We need your help so Mister Sae-Jin can be...” (Hazeline)

Even Hazeline's powerless answers sounded like f\*cking excuses to Kim Yu-Rin's ears.

“Your dog's not right to fight, you...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin shouted out in anger and reached down towards her waist. However, the quick-on-the-uptake Yi Hye-Rin had already absconded with Gungnir and escaped far, far away by then. Still not giving up, Kim Yu-Rin pounced at Hazeline with her bare hands.

“No, don't you come here!! We shouldn't be doing... Euahahck!!!” (Hazeline)

Kim Yu-Rin struck Hazeline's jaw with her fist, and swiftly climbed on top of the fallen Elf. Then, began raining down her fists on the helpless Hazeline's cheeks, nose, throat, collar bones, chest, pit of her stomach, and lower abdomen...

Suffering from earth-shaking pain that seemed to break her body into pieces, Hazeline reached out and reflexively grabbed Kim Yu-Rin's hair in a desperate attempt to save

herself.

“Euh!! Let go, now!!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“We, we shouldn’t be doing this!! Right now, Mister Sae-Jin is...” (Hazeline)

Hazeline looked deep into Kim Yu-Rin’s eyes and pleaded with her.

Unfortunately, Kim Yu-Rin’s anger soared even higher. Those eyes of Hazeline’s that showed her worries were... exactly the same as the eyes looking at ‘that guy’ in the past.

“Again?! You, you, you crazy bi\*ch!!!!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Completely losing her sh\*t now, Kim Yu-Rin screamed out the second-ever curse word she spat out in her entire life, and grasped Hazeline’s hair. And soon enough, a sorry excuse of a tug-of-war unfolded in earnest.

“Ahahahahck!!!”

“Kkyahahahck!!”

It was a fierce tug-of-war where no one could predict who might end up as a baldy first...

“Stop it, please!!”

“What is the matter with you two?! What are you all doing? Break them up!!”

Members of the raiding team rushed in towards the two bickering females, but completely enraged Kim Yu-Rin shoved everyone away and grabbed another handful of Hazeline’s hair.

“Hair, my hair’s gonna fall out!! My hair!! Yu-Rin-ah!!! Unni’s hair is gonna fall off!!” (Hazeline)

“Yu-Rin-ah?!?! Who does this crazy bi\*ch think is talking to...?!” (Kim Yu-Rin) *(TL: Just in case you don’t know, -ah is a suffix in Korean that’s attached at the end of a person’s name. It usually means someone younger or a child, but can also be used between friends. It’s similar to -chan or -kun in Japanese.)*

*Ttuk.*

Suddenly, with a short sound of *something* being pulled out, Kim Yu-Rin and Hazeline got finally separated.

“.....”

“..”

There was a heavy silence permeating in the room.

Finally freed from Kim Yu-Rin's death-like grips, Hazeline felt around her head while moaning out in pain.

And having felt something was off, she quickly turned her head to look, and...

Within the hands of Kim Yu-Rin, who had fallen on the floor due to the momentum, she could see two clumps of blonde hair being tightly held.

One second, two, then three... Before long, thick tear drops began forming in the eyes of the totally-dumbfounded Hazeline.

“My, my hair, my hair... I told you, it might come loose, didn't I... *\*SFX for a serious bout of uncontrolled sobbing\**”



The Guild ‘The Monster’ was currently showing remarkable results in the fields of defense industry, Monster subjugation, artifacts, as well as pension investment schemes. Many people predicted that the Guild's sister company, ‘TM’, would enter the top 10 in the rankings of the worldwide corporations. And, after becoming a landmark of sorts in Korean peninsula, the piece of land in Gangwon Province where the Guild's and the company's buildings were located on, began generating millions in tourist revenue alone.

On top of this, they even succeeded in penetrating into the closed-off, secretive and snobbish world of Wizards. It was all due to the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong, who showed much favouritism towards The Monster. And the members-only library of The Monster where every grimoire published by the Bangbae-Dong Wizard was stored, even got voted as the number one library Wizards wished to visit.

Whatever the case may have been, an enormous Guild that had surpassed its supposed rival Trilogy a long time ago, was holding a party aboard a cruise liner.

The invitation card of this particular party, where the top performers of The Monster Entertainment, as well as famous Knights and the current members of the Guild were supposed to attend, had somehow become a barometer to determine the level of fame and influence a person of high standing possessed.

Those who didn't receive the invitation raged out in regret, while those who did, proudly readied their attires for the party.

"So, the plan is, we apprehend the Vampire Elder who will attend this party stealthily, yes?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

There was a certain calmness present within the conference room where the proverbial storm had swept past.

"Yes, that's correct..." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin answered while continuously studying the mood.

She couldn't help but think about the sobbing Hazeline, busy isolating herself in the corner of the room while trying to concoct a certain potion. It was probably to mend the... 'bald spots' on her head. Its possible name, 'Hair-Growth' potion; if she succeeds in inventing it, she may end up making a profit of ten billion dollars, easy.

"With that, we can find where Mister Sae-Jin is being held?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"There's no guarantee, but still, we should try everything we can..." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Suddenly, Kim Yu-Rin stood up. A small stuffed doll of an Orc hanging on the scabbard of her sword dangled along.

"Wha, what?! What are you going to do now?!" (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin, as well as other members, hastily got up as well. They were worried about her pouncing on Hazeline once more. Thankfully, other than shooting a sharp glare at the back of Hazeline, Kim Yu-Rin didn't act out as others had feared.

"...I'm done doing that, for now. I need to go back to my Order and report that I'm



returning to active duty first. I got the okay for my vacation because of the post-op trauma, so if I attend a party like this, I will end up with a disciplinary action, you know.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Aha. In that case, let me go with you.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“By the way, Hazeline. Did you bring the potion to regenerate Rejen’s arms already? Just how long must she remain without arms?” (Yu Baek-Song)

It was then, the slightly tactless Yu Baek-Song asked the back of spotted head belonging to Hazeline.

“No, it’s okay, White Tiger-*nim*. I’ll be fine even if it’s later...” (Rejen)

The Soo-in Rejen lifted her upper torso from Yu Baek-Song’s lap where she had been laying down until now, and tried to take care of the Divine Beast’s lack of respect towards good timing.

“Uh-huh. I’ll take care of this so you keep resting.” (Yu Baek-Song)

However, the desires of Yu Baek-Song to take good care of her fellow Soo-in was a truly touching thing, and also...

“...In my pouch.” (Hazeline)

...Also, Hazeline muttered without even glancing back once.



The party above the cruise liner was scheduled to start at 8 in the evening, but the members had a need to prepare this and that beforehand, so they arrived three hours early. They then performed the final inspection of the torture chamber (?) hidden at the depths of the cruise ship.

“By the way, how did you explain this to Yu Sae-Jung?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“We sort of told her that he went on a business trip...” (Yi Hye-Rin)

At Yi Hye-Rin’s reply, Kim Yu-Rin’s brows narrowed.

“Seriously, you guys... Whew. When Sae-Jung arrives later today, you tell her the truth.”  
(Kim Yu-Rin)

“Eh? But, then she might end up worrying...” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Of course she must worry. How can she be his girlfriend, if she doesn’t even know anything at all?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....”

Yi Hye-Rin shut her mouth. Her lips itched to be opened, but she endured. If she could say this one thing, “But you’re a Moh-Tae-Solo”, then she would not have anything more to wish for, but it was prudent to keep her mouth shut. Definitely. *(TL: Moh-Tae-Solo – 모태솔로 The literal translation is “mother’s womb, solo”. It’s a slang term for “someone who’s never been in a romantic relationship in his or her entire life.”)*

“And, also...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin took a glance at Hazeline’s direction. Still stuck in some random corner, she was busy with creating the elusive hair-growth potion. The sounds of mortar and pestle – *tongtongtongtong* – seemed rather sad and forlorn, for some reason.

Kim Yu-Rin returned her gaze back to Yi Hye-Rin. Famed for her quick wits, Yi Hye-Rin got her drift soon enough, and asked Hazeline instead of Kim Yu-Rin.

“Miss Hazeline, do you by any chance know a mental manipulation magic?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“...A little bit.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline’s voice lacked energy, but that was fine. The effects of such magic was wholly dependant on the target’s mental resistance. And something like that would be taken care of Kim Yu-Rin’s fist, laden with her unique Trait.

“That’s all solved, then.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Miss Sae-Jung has arrived!” (Kim Sun-Ho)

The door was shoved open abruptly, and Kim Sun-Ho entered while shouting out. The complexions of everyone present became rather clouded.

“Should I go?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin made a suggestion.

“I’ll go with you.”

“Let me come with you.”

Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yi Hye-Rin spoke up at the same time. Kim Yu-Rin assumed a wry smile.

*Tongtongtongtong...*

With the somewhat sad background noise of the mortar and pestle pounding away, three of them left the torture chamber.

Entering the deck of the cruise liner, Yu Sae-Jung smiled and greeted the trio of Kim Yu-Rin, Yi Hye-Rin and Joo Ji-Hyuk.

Initially, she complimented on the layout of the party itself, but then, after glossing over the pleasantries, got down to business and began asking for Sae-Jin’s real whereabouts.

With a serious face, Kim Yu-Rin answered as truthfully as she could.

And everytime her lips moved, Yu Sae-Jung’s complexion paled further and further.

In the middle of the explanation, she even shouted out “What are you talking about? Is there a candid camera thing going on here or something?” But when Kim Yu-Rin finally got to the part “Mister Sae-Jin has been kidnapped”...

*Plop!!*

Yu Sae-Jung lost her consciousness and crumpled to the floor like a blow-up doll that lost all its air.

# Chapter 143

## Rescue (2)

“She fainted as soon as she heard the explanations?” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song asked as she took a look at Yu Sae-Jung, currently lying on a bed and totally unconscious.

“Yes. I think the shock must have been too heavy... but none of us expected her to collapse like this, at all.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin replied while touching Yu Sae-Jung’s forehead. As if she was suffering from a nightmare, her forehead was soaked with cold sweat.

“What should we do now...?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

The very person who should have played the role of the host for the party in the missing Kim Sae-Jin’s stead had now fainted. That was why they wanted to keep his kidnapping as a secret in the first place...

Thankfully, there was still a hour or so left until the start of the party, but then, would she wake up in time? And, even if she did wake up, could she be able to maintain a lucid state of mind...?

“There’s nothing we can do, but to get Mister Sae-Jin back as soon as possible..... Oi, Mister Vampire.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin’s eyes gleamed sharply as she looked at Rhosrahdell.

“Y, yes?!” (Rhosrahdell)

“You sure your plan is going to work?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“O, of course! Judging by the fact that the Vampires under the Bathory’s influence haven’t yet issued a kill-on-sight order towards the Nosferatus, she must’ve not informed her subordinates yet, and thus I suspect that she is still stuck together with

Mister Sae-Jin at this point in time. The plan will work 100%.” (Rhosrahdell)

“...Wait. Isn’t that strange? If she hasn’t informed her lackeys yet, then how can an Elder know Bathory’s location?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“When someone gets to the level of an Elder, he must sign an oath of blood with Bathory, which means they can track her aura quite accurately. The reason why they aren’t doing anything at the moment is because she gave them a strict order to *stay put* until she returns on her own volition.” (Rhosrahdell)

Kim Yu-Rin rubbed her chin and fell into a train of thought.

“In that case, you can definitely tell the face of the Elder, right?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Of course. I’ve had plenty of experience, and also...” (Rhosrahdell)

Suddenly, Rhosrahdell rolled up his sleeve and pushed forward his arm. His skin was the typical Vampire-pale, seemingly bloodless one but when he concentrated, a rather pretty blue emblem rose up from it. It was the ‘Magic Tattoo’, the trademark belonging only to Kim Sae-Jin and what the world referred to as truly ‘revolutionary’.

“Thanks to this, my senses have been greatly enhanced. No matter how well that Elder disguises his aura, I’ll be able to detect him.” (Rhosrahdell)

“...Good.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

It sure didn’t feel right to have a Vampire as a comrade, but it couldn’t be helped under the current circumstances.

Kim Yu-Rin sent Rhosrahdell back up to the deck and approached Yu Sae-Jung. When she sat near the head of the bed, Hazeline who was sitting nearby trembled hard and, *pababaht!!* hurriedly retreated far away. Sighing out grandly, Kim Yu-Rin glared at her and spat out a couple of hostile words.

“Are you truly worried about her?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...Wha, what are you talking about?” (Hazeline)

“Can’t you figure out what I’m talking about?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin gritted her teeth. Hazeline returned the sharp glare for a bit of time, but then, backed off and powerlessly replied.

“It’s true... I am worried for her...” (Hazeline)

And then, she picked up the mortar and pestle again.

*Tongtongtongtong...*

That was indeed a sad but desperate attempt to regrow hair back on the two spots on the crown of her head where it had been ripped out.

Yi Hye-Rin sent out gazes of pity towards Hazeline’s direction, while Kim Yu-Rin didn’t even spare a second of her time.

Another hour went by in this stifling silence.

Yu Sae-Jung didn’t wake up. And the deck was getting noisier and noisier now.

“We need to go upstairs now. But to leave her alone here, is just...” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin worriedly spoke.

“Then Hazeline, you guard her. After all, you can’t go outside with your hair all falling out and stuff.” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song spoke innocently enough, but Kim Yu-Rin shook her head while forming a grave expression.

“We can’t do that. That’ll be like letting a cat guard fish.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...And what’s wrong with letting a cat do that?” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song quickly glanced over at Kaiser the 2nd, lying inside a paper box. Seeing it yawn out in comfort, it seemed that the careless remarks didn’t hurt the feline’s feelings after all.

Kim Yu-Rin looked at Yu Baek-Song with a somewhat flustered expression.

“No, well, it’s not...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“I won’t do something like that again.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline, her back still turned towards them, spoke in a stiff but resolute voice as if to cut into the conversation.

“I’ve been regretting that for a long time.” (Hazeline)

“What...?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...I’m sorry. This Unni did something terribly wrong back then.” (Hazeline)

Although it was a sudden apology, one could still sense her true feelings contained within. And so, Kim Yu-Rin found herself unable to say anything.

As she kept her mouth shut and fell into a deep dilemma on how to respond...

*Tahng, tahng, tahng, tahng!*

The fireworks indicating the start of the party could be heard.

Using that as the suitable excuse, Kim Yu-Rin and Yu Baek-Song as well as the others hurriedly went upstairs.



Only the most outstanding individuals came to attend this grand party. Korean superstars that transcended past the Korean-Chinese-Japanese borders, career politicians who have stepped into the centres of governing circles, many Order Masters and Vice Masters from overseas Knights Orders, and even several Tower Lords from those Wizard Towers famed for their snobbishness were here.

The ‘main character’ of this party hadn’t arrived yet, but still, decked out in expensive and sophisticated party dresses, these people were already participating neck-deep in this unmissable networking opportunity.

Joo Ji-Hyuk was the first to enter the party. As if the emblem of ‘The Monster’ mounted on his chest possessed the power to capture all the attention of the partygoers, people began gravitating towards him.

“Uh-huh-huh. Isn’t this the representative of the Dawn Knights Order?”

A middle-aged politician named Yun Young-Ho, who was able to climb up to a position of importance within the 50-something age of his, engaged Joo Ji-Hyuk in conversation.

Now normally, this Yun Young-Ho character wouldn't even spare a second of his time with the likes of a Knight, unless he was facing a Master or a Vice Master of an Order. But, that golden badge on Joo Ji-Hyuk's chest was not something that could be seen commonly. As a matter of fact, if he could swap his ID card for the National Assembly with that golden emblem, he'd kowtow hundreds of times in a heartbeat.

"Ah, how have you been, Mister Assemblyman?" (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

"Hahaha. I've been very well, all thanks to your Guild."

"...Pardon?" (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Joo Ji-Hyuk tilted his head. Did The Monster even enter the world of politics lately as well?

"Huhuh. Actually, it was I who actively pursued for the export of TM's potions worldwide, see. Thanks to that, even the local potion market has revived for good, and many flattering remarks from our international counterparts landed on our doorsteps as well. Which allowed me to get re-elected quite successfully..."

Now that Joo Ji-Hyuk heard the man's words, he seemed to be yet another one filled with self-praise. Joo Ji-Hyuk let the politician's words flow through one ear and leave through the other one while he carefully surveyed the faces of the crowd.

"By the way, there is something I'm curious about. Does The Monster only pick its new members from the ranks of Knights and Wizards?"

"Ah..... Well, I don't think so. After all, isn't Instructor Yi Yu-Jin seeing a tremendous growth after becoming the Guild's member?" (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

"Oho, that is true! Hahaha, I've completely forgotten about that. I've heard that she has built ten-odd dojos for Jin Seh-Hahn's martial arts in the States already... Well, that is something, alright. Hahaha..."

Yun Young-Ho's eyes were shining brightly. They were the eyes of avarice, belonging to a person who had uncovered a *possibility*.



Whatever the case may have been, as the conversation continued, more and more people began crowding around Joo Ji-Hyuk.

“Ah, I’ve heard that the Guild Master, Mister Kim Sae-Jin, isn’t going to attend this party... Is that true?”

“Eh? Oh, yes. I said he won’t be able to come due to feeling a bit under the weather. Instead, we’ve arranged so you can enjoy the party stil...” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

It was then, the voice of a bodyguard manning the entrance to the party venue entered Joo Ji-Hyuk’s ear.

*“Mister Kim Jong-Hyuk from the Great Wisdom Investments and his acquaintance, confirmed.”*

Joo Ji-Hyuk hurriedly shifted the direction of his gaze. Thankfully, both Kim Yu-Rin and Rhosrahdell were moving towards the entrance already.



By seeing the various changes to his surroundings, Sae-Jin could estimate that he didn’t have much time left.

First of all, the interior of this isolated space had definitely increased in size compared to two days ago. Initially, it was nothing more than a pitch-black empty space, it soon grew into a size of a hotel room and now, the entire area grew to a size of about half the floor of the said hotel.

Secondly, the frequency of Bathory using magic spells which she hadn’t been using before, increased by a huge deal. Magic that cast restraints on targets, magic that cast shields on the caster, magic that even cast ‘mirrors’ within the space itself, etc, etc...

Of course, he could break them apart using the claws of the Wolf, but he couldn’t help but get worried by the gradual increase in the sophistication of the spells being used here.

“Hng~ Hng~ Hng~~.”

He could hear the humming of Bathory as she lay on a bed. Feeling annoyed all of a sudden, Sae-Jin slashed out with his claws. Bathory quickly performed a shield magic,

but the incoming claws easily shattered the shield and poked a hole in her stomach.

“Eek!! That hurts!”

Unfortunately, Bathory issued a short cry only. As if she was controlling her emotions well, she didn’t even lash out, either.

And that was the most glaring evidence of them all that said her body had recovered to a certain degree.

“Hey you. So, like, how come your attacks can slice through magic? It’s so mystifying, you know?” (Bathory)

Hell, she was even throwing him a question. While pulling his claws out in the most relaxed manner he could muster, Sae-Jin replied.

“My claws are special.” (Sae-Jin)

The claws of the Lycanthrope had almost reached the A level, so they were not constrained by the form or nature of the target, and could cut into pretty much anything in this world. Although it wouldn’t be easy, if Bathory wasn’t here, Sae-Jin could break open this isolation barrier as well.

“Hmm...” (Bathory)

Bathory formed a grin filled with *meanings* as she nodded her head.

“Well, that’s nice. It’s a nice little ability... By the way, isn’t it smart to give up ’round about now? If you do, I’ll even spare your life and let you become my eternal slave.” (Bathory)

Appearing right before Sae-Jin’s eyes before he could even react, Bathory pompously asked him. The flawless beauty of Bathory didn’t even have a single speck of embarrassment at this sudden close-up.

“I’m really interested in you, you know? Besides, keeping a being that was called our natural enemy around like a pet dog might be fun, too... And also, you agreed before, right? That our plans will succeed.” (Bathory)

Bathory was in the midst of recovering all her powers. And, if no relief pitcher showed

up within the next couple of innings, then this game was as good as over. So, under that kind of situation, her suggestion of not killing the Wolf that repeatedly injured her, could be seen as rather benevolent of her.

Too bad, the Wolf's instincts much preferred freedom over servitude, and 'self-indulgence' way over even freedom itself.

"Yeah, that's right. I think you'll succeed in your plans. I got this hazy feeling about that... However, isn't that going to be an even bigger problem for you?" (Sae-Jin)

"...And what the hell are you talking about?" (Bathory)

Bathory's brows furrowed. Kim Sae-Jin smirked and continued with his words.

"You are trying to twist the fabric of space and time to return to the 'past' version of your 'homeworld', am I right?" (Sae-Jin)

".....Right."

"However, by any chance, what happens if only one of that succeeds? To be more precise, what if there is no change in the timeline, but you still jump between the dimensions?" (Sae-Jin)

"....."

Almost immediately, Bathory's face became terrifying. However, since she had such a needlessly beautiful face to begin with, her expression wasn't that scary no matter how angry she appeared so.

"And your original world, the situation there is so bad that every living thing in that place just had to move to another world, am I right?" (Sae-Jin)

Reddish Mana filled with hostility oozed out from her, and veins in her forehead bulged and wiggled.

"So, what happens when you fail to return to the past and end up in the original world of present? Just what would be waiting for you back there? I don't know much, but I'm sure you know the answer very well already." (Sae-Jin)

Most likely, a being countless times more dangerous than the most dangerous beings

found on this planet would be waiting for the Vampires' arrival.

"If that happens, then it's mutual destruction, isn't it. When the Fissure completely opens up, the earth will be destroyed, and you who went back home will all die too, you morons." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin sneered at the scene that brushed past his consciousness back then – before sensing a pressure around his neck that was on another level altogether. When he looked down, both hands of Bathory were busy clasping his throat tightly in anger.

"Fuhut. Stop with your unlucky ramblings, okay? You're making me rescind my final bit of benevolence, you know... You sh\*tty piece of mongrel." (Bathory)

Bathory smiled as she spoke. Sae-Jin followed her and also formed a thick smile. Fangs of these two people glistened under the light.

Sae-Jin then savagely grabbed the back of her neck, and viciously bit into that smooth and fine neck with vengeance.

Meanwhile, Bathory shoved her hand to his side and began destroying his bones.

And so, while blood overflowed everywhere, the bodies of two people piled up on top of the bed together.

[Bathory's blood has been absorbed! Both the Degrees of Progression and Advancement increases.] [Bathory's blood has been absorbed! Both the Degrees of Progression and Advancement increases.] [Bathory's blood has been absorbed! Both the Degrees of Progression and Advancement increases...]

The pain was indescribable, but he was still feeling rather good regardless. His provocation was a success, which meant her recovery would be delayed by a few more days, while several satisfactory alert windows continued to pop up as well.

But he had to be careful here.

After all, Vampires would be the most sensitive beings in this world when it came to

sucking on another's blood. Carefully, carefully; slowly, slowly – he should cautiously suck on this juicy pile of experience points...

# Chapter 144

## Rescue (3)

Kim Jong-Hyuk entered the party venue with a handsome and tall foreigner in tow.

“Hmph... It’s not too shabby, I suppose.”

Kim Jong-Hyuk sneered as he took in the surroundings. Beautiful actresses and female Knights were everywhere. Although he didn’t come here for *that*, it did seem a bit like a wasted opportunity to not have his ways with all these women.

No, actually, the feeling of righteous anger was stronger than that of regret over missed chances. The b\*stards who snorted in disdain when he called out to them, were now busy wagging their tails right now.

“Mister Trudeau?”

Kim Jong-Hyuk turned around to look at ‘Trudeau’ with courteous eyes. The foreigner narrowed his brows a little, but he still nodded his head once.

“Three’s the limit. And Knights with strong resistance are a no.”

“Hahaha. That’s going to be enough.” (Kim Jong-Hyuk)

As soon as Trudeau’s permission was given, Kim Jong-Hyuk extracted a ring from his inner pocket. There was a strange and blood-coloured gem stuck in the middle.

“Hehehe...”

Just as Kim Jong-Hyuk grinned an evil grin and was about to jump into the middle of the attractive actresses...

“Huh? Aren’t you Mister Kim Jong-Hyuk? This is a pleasant surprise.”

The High Tier Knight affiliated with the Raven Order and the member of The Monster Guild, Yi Hye-Rin approached him. And Kim Yu-Rin was following her as well. Two of

them kitted out in eye-catching dresses were as beautiful as Elves, so the overtly licentious Kim Jong-Hyuk had to stop everything he was doing and take a large gulp of saliva instead.

“.....Ahahaha. Well, look who it is. I just ran into the real VIPs here. It’s my pleasure.”  
(Kim Jong-Hyuk)

“Fuhut, we are not VIPs at all. Isn’t that what we are supposed to say? By the way, who is this gentleman next to you?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

The moment Yi Hye-Rin smiled and spoke, a voice seemingly seeped into her mind.

– *It’s the Elder.*

It was a telepathy from Rhosrahdell.

“He is the current Vice President of the firm ‘Rolaina Intrude’. They are an international investment firm, so I’m not sure if lady Knights have heard of them...”  
(Kim Jong-Hyuk)

“Of course, we’ve heard of them. This must be some type of a fated encounter, so how about we share a drink or two?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

While smiling with her eyes, Yi Hye-Rin checked for Kim Yu-Rin’s reaction. *Oho? Captain acting out in that bashful expression is really amazing?!*

“Looks like Captain here is okay with that as well?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“...Well, if you guys want it, then. Hahaha.” (Kim Jong-Hyuk)

Kim Jong-Hyuk guffawed and eyed Trudeau. His eyes arrogantly said, ‘See? I’m a man of this much status.’

“...Hmm.”

Trudeau thought about this for a moment. Even if it was the Elder-level charm magic, against high Tiered Knights, there was a big possibility of it failing to stick.

However, hidden within the trouser pockets of Kim Jong-Hyuk was *the* highest grade ‘aphrodisiac.’

Concocted with the utmost care by the Vampires, this aphrodisiac should prove effective even against high Tiered Knights, and when alcohol was added in the mix as well, then the odds wouldn't be bad at all.

"...I'm fine with that." (Trudeau)

Trudeau assumed a thick smile and looked at the two Knights.

"In that case, should we head to a guest room below deck? I don't enjoy all this hustle and bustle, actually." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"Well, that's great. Lead the way." (Kim Jong-Hyuk)

Four of them formed a group and climbed down the stairs of the ship, and at the same time, another Vampire trailed them from behind, his presence nearly undetectable.

*\*SFX for footsteps.\**

And as he walked down the steps, Trudeau suddenly had a strange yet foreboding feeling coming over him.

It wasn't solely because no matter how much he walked, the bottom of the stairs couldn't be seen. There was also a faint but familiar presence coming from behind him...

When Trudeau turned around to look, the world seemed to darken all of a sudden.

"W, what?!"

As Kim Jong-Hyuk panicked grandly and looked around, a blunt scabbard of a sword was swung his way.

*Khong!*

A completely useless third wheel was soon knocked out with a well-placed smack to the middle of his forehead.

'It's a trap!'

Trudeau hurriedly tried to activate teleportation, but the golden sword light pouring



out from Kim Yu-Rin sliced off his right arm before that.

“Kkheuahahahck!!”

With the arm needed to complete the technique gone, the teleportation got cancelled immediately. Trudeau panicked and tried to form ‘Venom Spear’ with his remaining arm instead.

Almost right away, from his back, dozens, hundreds of black spears materialised in the air.

Each of these spears were manifestations of a powerful venom, so these human scums would be grievously wounded even with the slightest touch...

It was definitely a high-grade spell, but unfortunately for him, the compatibility was poor – Yi Hye-Rin’s sword could distort the space itself and slice apart magic, after all.

*\*SFX for air being split\**

The sword swung by Yi Hye-Rin deflected one spear away, and then, began bending in a weird way to rapidly destroy all the other spears.

The pitiful Trudeau didn’t even have time to panic at all – because, at that moment, Kim Yu-Rin’s Gungnir had cut off his other arm...

“Keu-ah...”

Kim Yu-Rin set about the ‘purpose’ of her Trait as ‘mute’, so he couldn’t even scream in pain anymore. Losing both of his arms, he ended up kneeling down on the floor.

“ ... ”

The isolation barrier was cancelled by then, and Trudeau could spot the despicable traitor busy loitering about past the shoulders of the female Knights.

‘Do you not fear the wrath of the Lord?!’ (Trudeau)

He wanted to scream out, but his voice didn’t want to come out. However, Trudeau didn’t give up and forcefully pushed his vocal chords as hard as he could – until he sensed a strange voice buzzing around near his brain.

*– Let's be honest, Mister Elder, you also have been suspecting it for a while, haven't you? That our plan has a higher chance of failing altogether. I merely chose a path of survival for myself.* (Rhosrahdell)

It was a telepathy sent from Rhosrahdell. Trudeau hurriedly sent back furious swearings and angry shouts, but by then, the younger Vampire had firmly shut the communication off.

Now that he was completely trapped, Trudeau's face reddened even more, and as he struggled uselessly, blood poured out like waterfall from where his arms used to be. Although his consciousness got blurred from all that blood loss, Trudeau still glared at Rhosrahdell with bloodshot eyes.

Too bad for him, all those fury, cursings, and hatred that went unheard now, would remain unheard forever.



For how long had she been swimming in the pit of meaningless abyss?

*"Let's get married."*

She suddenly recalled a man who said the words she wanted to hear so much in a slurred speech. Right away, Yu Sae-Jung's eyes snapped open.

*Tongtongtongtong...*

The first thing she heard was the sound of a pestle pounding on a mortar, and soon afterwards, her heart began to burn hotly. Even tears began to well up. Yu Sae-Jung tried to get up hastily but her feet got tangled up and, *Kwadangtang!!* fell flat on the floor.

*"...Mommy!?!?"* (Hazeline)

The sound of mortar and pestle came to a halt, and the woman who had been using them turned to look at her.

*"...Unni?"* (Yu Sae-Jung)

*"Sae, Sae-Jung, you are awake."* (Hazeline)

Hazeline put the pestle down and approached Yu Sae-Jung to help her stand up.

“Are you alright? You should still rest...” (Hazeline)

“Let me go!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

However, Yu Sae-Jung coldly pushed the helping hands away. She suddenly felt wronged and furious. She was Kim Sae-Jin’s girlfriend. They even promised to get married. So why was she the very last person to be informed about his kidnapping?

“Sa, Sae-Jung-ah?! Please, calm down first, and...” (Hazeline)

“How can I calm down in this situation?! Oppa has been kidnapped! But besides that, where is everyone else? Call them over here right now!!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

She gritted her teeth as Mana began boiling above her skin. Definitely a bad sign, that was the first indication of the condition, ‘Mana Deviation’. It was one of the most fatal conditions for either Knights and Wizards, where Mana went out of control, resulting in all the accumulated Mana leaking out and their lives being placed in mortal danger.

Hazeline’s brows narrowed to a slit.

“Sae-Jung, you need to calm down. You being like this isn’t going to help anyone, you know?” (Hazeline)

“Help anyone, my a\*s! You all knew already, so why?! Why didn’t you tell me before?!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Because, we thought you might get too worried...” (Hazeline)

“Worries? Of course I would worry!! Get outta my way!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung pulled herself up and staggered towards the exit of the room. Hazeline sighed out and in the end, pulled out a bottle of potion from her inner robe pocket.

It was the sleeping potion.

After popping open the lid, she poured it over Yu Sae-Jung who couldn’t even walk properly but was behaving rather recklessly.

“Ah-ahck!! Hey!! What are you doin...”

Hazeline was sure of hearing an unpleasant form of informal speech, but whatever – Yu Sae-Jung powerlessly slid down to the floor.

And almost right away, the door to the room was pushed open. And it was the members of the rescue team, accompanying a Vampire that could be the Elder.

They were rushing inside but after discovering the situation, stopped in their tracks.

Yu Sae-Jung, who was on the ground after suffering the effects of an unknown potion, while there was Hazeline, holding a potion bottle.

Kim Yu-Rin’s hand slowly reached down to her hips, towards her sword.

“...I just put her to sleep because she was rampaging around. Please, don’t doubt me on this one. Yu-Rin? Please let go of your weapon. Let go. I’ll really die with that. Like, really die. Really.” (Hazeline)



Persuading the Elder was quite easy. After pounding on the Elder’s face with Kim Yu-Rin’s fists loaded with the purpose of ‘shearing away bits of mental resistance with every punch landed’, the Elder’s mind finally became soft as mush, and using that opening, Hazeline’s mind manipulation magic dealt the final critical blow.

And so, they had succeeded in turning this Elder into a puppet, but...

“So, what should we do about this guy?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin pointed to the additional guest of this mess, Kim Jong-Hyuk, and asked.

“Oi, Bob Ross, can you make so that he will forget about today’s matters?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Of course.”

At Kim Yu-Rin’s demand, Rhosrahdal stepped forward smartly and began pouring his Mana into Kim Jong-Hyuk’s brain.

“It’s all done. He will remember it as having had a blackout after drinking himself into a stupor.” (Rhosrahdel)

“That’s a relief. Well done, Bob Ross.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...By the way, just who is a Bob Ross? I’m Rhosrahdel.”

She lightly ignored ‘Bob Ross’ and his complaints and instead, Kim Yu-Rin took a slight glance at Yu Sae-Jung lying on the bed.

“What time did the butler from the Dawn household say he’ll be here?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“He said soon.”

Kim Yu-Rin nodded her head with a complicated expression on her face. It was regrettable, but Yu Sae-Jung’s mental state would only be a hindrance to them. On top of that, according to Hazeline’s words, she even exhibited signs of ‘Mana Deviation’, too...

“Alright, then. Is everyone ready? If you wish to be forgiven by Yu Sae-Jung, you need to bring the Guild Master Kim Sae-Jin home no matter what!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Yes, ma’am. We will!”

Everyone energetically spat out the same answer.



*\*SFX for the engine roaring\**

Driving on a precipitous mountain road was a wide-bodied SUV packed to the brim with eight people inside.

Kim Yu-Rin’s driving was top-notch, but at the same time, it was also quite rough as well, so the passengers all looked to be in some serious discomfort. Especially so for Yu Baek-Song, who just so happened to possess keener senses than regular humans; with a face of someone literally dying, she was in the middle of busy *harming* herself, such as hitting her head repeatedly against the back of the middle row of passenger seats.

“It’s the East Sea in this direction. Is this place correct?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Yes. Just a little bit further...”

Trudeau replied with a dazed face.

“Straight ahead?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Yes...”

“Okay.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Even though they were on the unpaved road, she still stepped hard on the accelerator. And because this, but interior of the car began shaking madly as if an earthquake had broken out or something.

“Wait, wait, I might... really throw up... at this rate...” (Yu Baek-Song)

Not too long after, Yu Baek-Song’s powerless voice came from the furthest seats at the back.

“Huh?! No, you can’t! You can’t, you must not throw up in here!! I telling you right now, you must not throw up, got that?!” (Hazeline)

And the person raving madly was Hazeline, seating right next to her.

“No, no, I can’t hold back anymore, you know?! I can’t endure it no more. I might really die at this rate. No, I am already dead. Dead. Just treat me like a dead person.” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Endure it. Endure it!! I’m telling you to endure. Seriously, I’m telling y...” (Hazeline)

*“Bleeeeergghhh!!”*

“Kkyahahahahack!!!!” (Hazeline)

Chaos was unfolding at the rearmost set of seats, but Kim Yu-Rin didn’t stop the car. No, instead of stopping, she actually increased the speed after her urgent need to rescue Kim Sae-Jin and the excitement at being given the opportunity to drive offroad real fast after long while, ended up overlapping.

“Argh, Mister Sae-Jin gave this robe to me as a present, you know!! Your *sh\*t* is all over it now, you stupid cat!!” (Hazeline)

“.....*Bleurghhhhh*.”

“Sh\*t... Heup! Stop! Stop the car, Yu-Rin. Yu-Rin!! Stop!! I’m also gonna throw up... Woo-eup!! *Blergh!!*”

“...Mister Bob Ross? Please deploy a shield around the rearmost seats. The smell may come over to this side.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“I’ve already deployed one a while ago, so you don’t have to worry, ma’am. And I said, I’m not Bob Ross.” (Rhosrahdell)

Yi Hye-Rin, Kim Sun-Ho, and Joo Ji-Hyuk let out sighs of relief. They decided to leave the matters of the rearmost seats to the people back there.



After 40 minutes of torturous driving later, the group finally arrived at the place the Vampire Elder had lead them to. And well, it was indeed an area so secluded and lonely, they never could have guessed such a place even existed before.

“Well, there aren’t anyone with problems, right?” Asked Kim Yu-Rin.

If one thought of Hazeline and Yu Baek-Song who were mired in the sick of each other as “problems”, they were indeed problematic, but Rhosrahdell’s cleaning magic spell managed to completely wash both of them, well, *clean*.

“Since you knew a magic like this, you really should’ve used this spell sooner... Really, I don’t like you at all.” (Hazeline)

“There it is. Wow, as expected of Bathory. Look how sturdy the isolation barrier is.” (Rhosrahdell)

Lightly ignoring the grumblings of Hazeline, Rhosrahdell pointed at the dome-shaped jet-black barrier at the distance.

“What should we do now, Captain?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“I should be able to destroy the barrier with my Gungnir. But the problem is what comes next. How should we deal with Bathory?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...Hmm. How about this method?” (Kim Sun-Ho)

Kim Sun-Ho raised his hand.

“What is it?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“TM has been in charge of defense against the Monster threats, so... They have come up with many innovative items such as unmanned arbalests and gun turrets.” (Kim Sun-Ho) *(ED: For people who don't know what an arbalest is, just imagine Van-Helsing hunting vampires with that crossbow. That crossbow is an arbalest.)*

“.....Ah?!”

Kim Yu-Rin's eyes widened in an instant, but soon, she slowly shook her head.

“We don't have the time. We need to rescue the Guild Master before something happens to him.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“We can deploy the Mercenaries from the Company, so within half a day – no, less than one hour will be enough.” (Kim Sun-Ho)

“.....”

Kim Yu-Rin studied the reactions of her comrades. Yi Hye-Rin thought this was a good idea, so she readily agreed to it and even added in her own thoughts.

“Hazeline Unni, you can still do that thing, right? The magic that eliminates Mana.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Uh? Uh, uh... But, I think ten seconds will be the limit, most likely.”

Being called ‘Unni’ out of the blue, Hazeline got bewildered slightly and stuttered with her speech.

“.....Whew. Then, we'll call the Mercenary Company to install those. Mister Sun-Ho?” (Kim Yu-Rin)



In any case, Bathory's aim was to tame the Azure Dragon. So, at minimum, it was guaranteed that she wouldn't kill him, and even Kim Sae-Jin himself wouldn't want to see his fellow Guild members sacrificing themselves either.

"Let's exclude the gun turrets and go with the arbalests. The Guild Master might end up getting mixed up in the attack." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"Yes ma'am, understood." (Kim Sun-Ho)

Kim Sun-Ho hurriedly made a call to someone.

And less than 30 minutes later...

*\*SFX for the rotors of helicopters spinning\**

Twelve helicopters covered up the entire night sky, and dozens of Mercenaries descended from them while carrying all the necessary gears.

"...Wow. What the hell. So fast."

Under the admiration of the rescue team, the Mercenaries managed to install tens of the unmanned arbalests in less than 20 minutes.

"What did you tell them?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"I explained that we have trapped a powerful Monster within the barrier." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"That's fine. Tell them to leave the area now." (Kim Yu-Rin)

In the end, unless the real 'elites' were involved, Bathory couldn't be taken down. Of course, the Mercenaries from the Monster were well known for their competence, but it was the right thing to avoid meaningless death at all times.

"Understood."

Kim Sun-Ho ordered them to return while clapping his hands; the Mercenaries retreated as swiftly as a fired arrow.

# Chapter 145

## Rescue (4)

It was unknown how much time had passed by. However, he knew for sure that the inner area of the isolated space had grown as big as an elementary school playground.

It indeed seemed like a hopeless situation, but there was also something else to console Sae-Jin as well.

As he continued to tussle and fight with Bathory, the ‘Degree of Advancement for structure of the muscles and bone density’ continued to increase and increase until finally, the alert window that said [Muscles have been strengthened, and the bones have been fortified] accompanied the 100% completion for the Advancement.

The improvement was quite easy to see for himself. Not only the pain he felt after getting kicked and punched by the annoyed Bathory decreased noticeably, it was now possible to contend against her physically to a certain degree. Of course, he was still helpless against her magic attacks, though.

On the other side, Bathory was finding it quite suspicious regarding Sae-Jin’s sudden increase in his overall sturdiness. But she let go of her suspicions pretty quickly after he came up with an excuse of “I’ve become used to your violent assaults, that’s all.”

Whatever – he still got to completely assimilate the ‘physical essence’ of Bathory for himself, and the next thing he started absorbing was [the knowledge of sorcery accumulated for the past 300 years.]

He initially hoped for the Skill where he could morph his entire body into pure vapours of Mana, but still, this was none other than *the* ‘sorcery’ – something that was commonly believed to be one level superior to regular magic. As the Leviathan, a being of Mana, he would be able to wield sorcery far more effectively than Bathory ever will.

And right now – the Degree of Advancement for sorcery was at 15%.

“Heu-hng, it’s all done~.” (Bathory)

And so, as he was trying to piece together 15% worth of fragmented knowledge of the sorcery in his head, Bathory's rather pleased chuckles could be heard out of the blue.

He sent a curious gaze towards her way. There was no need for him to say anything, really – she should start grumbling all on her own, anyway.

“Fuhut.” (Bathory)

But for this time around, Bathory's explanations weren't strictly necessary.

There was a paper castle stacked up with playing cards in front of her. Bathory had built this 50 centimetre-tall stack with the method Sae-Jin taught her, and it was quite apparent that she was very pleased with herself.

Feeling rather cantankerous for some reason, Sae-Jin blew with his mouth. The paper castle trembled pitifully before it collapsed, and Bathory's face crumpled along as well.

“What the hell are you doing?!” (Bathory)

“Is it fun? Shouldn't have taught you that.” (Sae-Jin)

“Really now, acting exactly like a man who is about to die, your temper is so rotten... But, besides all that, hey you. Don't you wanna play a round of cards with me again?” (Bathory)

The card game Bathory was referring to was ‘One-card’. He played it with her before after seeing how bored she looked but now, she was bothering him over 18 times a day about playing it with her. Of course, when talking about a day, it was in terms of the flow of time within this isolated space. Although, it was not known how many days it would be outside for one day spent inside. *(TL: “One-card” is a type of card game played mostly in South Korea. I've never heard of it, but there's a page for it in Wikipedia.)*

“Don't want to.” (Sae-Jin)

“...How ridiculous. It was you who wanted to play it before. Is it because you lost to me all the time?” (Bathory)

“You are welcome to believe that if you want.” (Sae-Jin)

In front of the complaining Bathory, the ace that used to occupy the top spot of the now-collapsed paper castle floated down quite lazily.

He looked at that innocuous occurrence without thinking too much when, quite suddenly, a single wisp of electricity buzzed past his brain cells. A feeling of a chill going down his spine – the Lycanthrope’s intuition was acting up. No, it wasn’t as if he had another peek at the future. Just that, a certain suspicion brushed past his brain like a flash of light, that was all.

“...Oii.” (Sae-Jin)

“What?” (Bathory)

She replied while gathering the deck of cards. Since she sounded grumpy, Sae-Jin had to think for a bit. What he was about to say was going to be seen as far greater misconduct than blowing off her paper castle, after all.

“What is it? Speak up, will you. You’re going to die soon anyways, so why are you being hesitant?” (Bathory)

“Fut.”

He ended up chuckling after hearing her words. Although it was her own arrogant desire of not wanting to breathe in same air as humans, she apparently lived all her life stuck in a castle somewhere, and well, she was certainly full of curiosity as a result. And if she was so inquisitive, then that also meant she would be full of questions as well.

In that case, she would have no choice but to admit to the words others might think of as nothing more than an attempt to sour the relationship.

“Well, it’s nothing. Just asking because I’m curious. Your ‘plan’, did your Lord declare it will definitely succeed?” (Sae-Jin)

When he cautiously tested the waters, Bathory proudly nodded her head.

“That’s right. Our Lord can see everything, you see? Although, he is old now and he has to sleep a lot nowadays.” (Bathory)

“Hmph. So, that guy must be thinking that both the time and space can be distorted at

the ‘same’ time?” (Sae-Jin)

Bathory’s brows narrowed.

“That’s right. Both at the same time. Hey, what are you trying to say here? Stop beating around the bush!” (Bathory)

“No, see. I’m just curious. That doesn’t make sense, though. You ever heard of the term ‘contradiction’?”

Bathory didn’t know, but still nodded her head in an oblique angle as if she knew it already.

“...I’ll explain that later. Whatever, what you Vampires want is to reverse the timeline and jump across space all at once. Time, and space... Just which one needs to proceed first in order for the plan to succeed?”

“...What rubbish are you spewing this time? You really a mongrel. You even bark like one when you talk.” (Bathory)

As expected, her expressions were sullen. No, actually, it seemed like she had no idea what he was talking about in the first place.

“Well now, think about this carefully. If the timeline was reversed first, then there won’t be any Fissure in your new time period, so how will you jump across the dimensions? And also, if you jump through the dimensions first, then the new dimension won’t have the Fissure there, so how will you reverse the timeline?” (Sae-Jin)

Looking at the plan with a critical eye, influencing both the time and space simultaneously was impossible. No matter what, the difference of a single microsecond should always exist.

That was why, their plan definitely had a contradiction to it. It wasn’t a particularly hard to understand this problem; even a layman would realise this issue eventually, given enough time.

In other words, Vampires would’ve caught onto this contradiction pretty easily as well – only if it wasn’t for the presence of someone who could block any and all suspicions... the Vampire Lord, a figure who demanded blind, unquestioning and absolute loyalty

from his subjects.

“Well, to me... No matter how hard I think about it, it feels like your Lord is using you.”  
(Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin said this only one line, but the thick killing intent and heavy pressure were quickly added to the atmosphere. However, after fully assimilating Bathory's constitution, such physical threats were as good as non-existent to him now.

“...Hey, maybe you don't want to die after all? How about living the rest of your miserable life being ripped to shreds by other Monsters?” (Bathory)

Her voice was tinged in pure rage. But still, within her quietly-trembling eyes, a type of restlessness that couldn't be hidden away could also be felt.

“Besides, there is no need for the Lord to something like that.” (Bathory)

“So, here's the thing. You all want to return to your original world, right? But your Lord probably doesn't. Most likely, he already knows it's impossible to return to the past version of your home world.” (Sae-Jin)

“.....”

“Even I think it's definitely possible to overturn either the timeline or dimensions, sure. But that's only when you choose one or the other – the time, or the space. So, in other words, maybe the Lord is planning to drop you off at your home world like a bad habit, while himself alone – or maybe, with those goons loyal only to him, return to the past version of the earth~~, so he can swallow up the defenseless version of this planet for himself.” (Sae-Jin)

“You shut your damn mouth!!” (Bathory)

As soon as he finished speaking, Bathory pounced on him while growling wildly. Unlike the other times, though, her movement was urgent and lacked that certain elegance she possessed. Was that the clear evidence of her being restless?

Sae-Jin pushed her face away with both of his hands and continued on with his words.

“I heard Rhosrahdal call you as the future leader of the Vampires. But here's something else – you think the Lord will accept that? Vampires are a bunch of ambitions and

desires rolled into one. I mean, doesn't the ones with nobler than noblest bloodlines have stronger obsession towards power and prestige?" (Sae-Jin)

"*Kobhack!!* The Lord has already said, he will choose the replacement for his aging self..." (Bathory)

"Well, that is, who would like it when he says he will rule over you lot for hundreds, maybe thousands of years into the future? Doesn't matter how well the Lord controls Vampire's instincts to drink blood by using whatever special artifact, he will get his a\*s assassinated long before that. Besides, after he hands over the position, what would happen if one of you cause a revolt or something?" (Sae-Jin)

Calming down his shaking heart, Sae-Jin did his best to form a sneer.

"Oh, by the way, is it really true that the Lord sleeps a lot? From what I've heard, doesn't he have, like, 100 more years left in his lifespan?" (Sae-Jin)

It was then, Bathory's Mana began rising up like a dragon ascending to heavens. The blood-coloured Mana boiling spectacularly on her skin showed off how violent her fury was this time around.

"Our Lord isn't that kind of a person." (Bathory)

Sae-Jin smiled and added the final words, "Oh, is he really?"

Maybe that crossed her bottom line, since she pounced on him as if she was planning to dissect him right there and then. He sank his fangs on her shoulders and desperately held on. Soon after, he was greeted by the type of pain where it felt like his organs were being pulled out one by one and his spine was being smashed into pieces.

And after some time had passed by...

Bathory abruptly stopped what she was doing.

*\*SFX for sucking noises\**

"...What the?! You stupid mosquito!!" (Bathory)

She angrily pushed Sae-Jin off her as he continued to suck on her blood.

As he was lamenting on the fact that the Degree of Advancement was still only at 30%...

Suddenly, the cracks began forming on the walls of the isolation barrier.

“Oh? Looks like the rescue party has arrived.” (Sae-Jin)

A smile automatically formed on his lips. He retracted the fur covering his body – he changed back to the human’s appearance. Bathory stared at him with an unreadable expression, before her lips twisted upwards.

“Really? In that case... I should kill them all, then.” (Bathory)



When the golden sword light cut into the wall of the barrier, a rift ripped open on the part of the jet-black dome that didn’t look like it’d break no matter what. And three seconds later, with a loud ripping noise, the rift appearing on one side spread out to the rest of the dome, and the whole thing shattered and fell apart like falling pieces of glass.

“We did it!!”

“Mister Sae-Jin!!”

There were two people within the isolated space.

As expected, they were Bathory woman and Kim Sae-Jin.

However, their positions were a bit strange. Sae-Jin was lying on the ground, while Bathory was straddling him on top. It was somewhat suggestive, and also was a position of dominance...

“That, that crazy bi\*ch is!!” (Hazeline)

Seeing this scene, Hazeline screamed out even before she had the chance to think.

“What did you say?” (Bathory)

Hearing that uncalled-for name-calling, Bathory’s face crumpled to resemble a demon.



Then, Mana began to pour out from her body.

But, it was right at this moment when Hazeline's 'Mana suppression' activated. By sacrificing every single Mana Stone of Monsters taken from The Monster's warehouse, they succeeded in suppressing Bathory's Mana.

"These damn mongrels... Kkheuck!!" (Bathory)

After the usage of Mana was forcibly taken away from her, hundreds of arbalests fired their load at Bathory.

Horrifying noises of flesh being blown away resounded out, and countless sharp bolts fired off from the arbalests turned Bathory into a hedgehog in the blink of an eye.

But everyone knew this wasn't going to be enough. Yi Hye-Rin's whip sword, Joo Ji-Hyuk's greatsword, the front claws of the White Tiger, and Kim Yu-Rin's Gungnir descended down on Bathory's figure at the same time.

"Sh\*t..." (Bathory)

They had more bodies than her. And she also had only one more life remaining.

Bathory had to swallow her humiliation and send a rescue signal to her lackeys.

*Kwaaaahang!!*

Countless sword auras rushed in like a storm of thunderbolts. Still, Bathory endured and avoided some of them. No need for crap like Mana, just with her physical body only.

She barely managed to dodge the golden sword aura rushing towards her heart. She then grabbed the curvy sword that drew a strange arc and brushed past her throat, throwing it down to the ground. And the Knight holding that whip-like sword, Yi Hye-Rin, accompanied her weapon and slammed into the ground as well.

"Kkeuahck!!"

"Hye-Rin!! Are you alri..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Next, Bathory dashed towards the female Knight *relaxedly* worrying about her

comrade and punched her gut.

The female Knight commendably endured against Bathory's physical power, but still, a fair amount of blood gushed out from her mouth. Bathory pounced on Kim Yu-Rin in order to finish her off, while Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yu Baek-Song stepped forward to block her...

Seeing this battle unfold, Sae-Jin intuitively knew they would lose.

Hazeline's efforts in Mana suppression was at its limit, and her Mana reserve was simply too empty to fire off any sort of offensive magic spells. On top of this, Bathory's reinforcements should be arriving any time now.

In other words, 'retreat' was the correct answer here.

But, what about the method? Using 'speed' to evade Bathory and escape was simply a crazy wish. She was fully capable of a crazy turn of speed where she could easily exceed the speed of sound and travel over a kilometre in one second.

So, he need to think of a means to escape. Think.

He abruptly recalled the part of a certain sorcery, so he hurriedly began to dive into the accumulated knowledge he stole and stored deep within his mind.

When he searched, he found one.

'The instant transmission.'

It was the sorcery Bathory used to kidnap him back then.

*Kwaaahang!!*

At the same time, Kim Yu-Rin's Gungnir collided with Bathory's bare fist and a huge wall of dust cloud exploded upwards. And within this cloud where one's view was obscured, Sae-Jin identified the locations of his comrades and summoned forth his Mana in order to compose the 'sorcery'.

As expected – the Leviathan's ability to integrate and wield Mana was simply beyond the capabilities of other species.

“...What?!” (Bathory)

Bathory sensed something was amiss, and quickly began to get rid of the dust cloud. But, as she did so, blue Mana mushroomed up and surrounded Kim Sae-Jin's comrades, and...

*Poof!*

...They all vanished into thin air.

“Where?!... Wha, what the hell?” (Bathory)

Bathory ended up punching the empty air quite unexpectedly, and as a result, she was left utterly confused – initially, at least.

“What the hell is this? Where did you run off to?! Where the hell are you, you scummy mongrel sons of bi\*ches!!! Aahahahahack!!!” (Bathory)

Then, she exploded in pure rage. Did Kim Yu-Rin succeed in landing a blow to her face? Bathory's swollen cheek seemed to further enhance the awful and ugly atmosphere.

“...My, my queen!!”

“Ha-ah, ha-ah... Hey, you b\*stards, why are you so bloody late?!” (Bathory)

“My, my apologies!! Should we chase after them? We have detected the flow of their Mana!!”

Elders and Apostles hurriedly appeared and knelt down before her.

Bathory wiped away the blood from her lips and tidied up her messy hair while cold words of fury exploded out from her mouth.

“No. I'm more or less calm now. And what if we chase after them? They'll just run away using the same method again, anyway...” (Bathory)

“In, in that case?”

Bathory fell into a dilemma, before she abruptly recalled what Sae-Jin had said, that one about the Vampire Lord deceiving the Vampires.

That was definitely a disrespectful statement that even the most horrifying death wouldn't be enough of a punishment. However...

"...I'm gonna meet with the Lord." (Bathory)

"Eh? Pardon me, my queen. We definitely understand your majesty's fury. However, the Lord hasn't woken up yet, so..."

Hearing that pathetically weak voice, her blood seemed to well up in the reverse direction.

Why did she not possess a single *fun* lackey amongst all her underlings? Why did every one of them know only to grovel so pathetically?

While she glared at these failures of male kind whose knees and even their heads were firmly glued to the ground, she couldn't help but recall the man who had been next to her only until a few moments ago.

And at the same time, countless flames of anger spiked up, each of them carrying diverse feelings within.

"Shut up, you stinking insects!! I'm going to see the Lord, so just make the godd\*mn way already!!" (Bathory)

Her super-loud yell seemed to shake the quiet mountainside.

# Chapter 146

## A Hero, an Orc, a Human (1)

The sorcery activated by the Leviathan, the ‘instant transmission’, was indeed a success. The place they arrived at was the underground conference room they’ve been using until now. However, since Sae-Jin activated it in a hurry, he couldn’t have waited for all eight people’s feet to be on the ground before he activated the spell.

Meaning, a few of them were transferred while their heads or some other body parts were rammed to the ground.

“Kkyack!!”

“Eeek!!”

“Ah-ahck!!”

As a result, there was a bit of chaos filled with painful cries, but still, Sae-Jin breathed a sigh of relief after confirming that he didn’t leave anyone behind. At the same time, a stinging dizziness from abusing his Mana reserve swept over him.

“Are you alright?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Sae-Jin in his Leviathan Form staggered about, and Kim Yu-Rin helped him to stand still. The weird scene where a human was helping out a ‘dragon’ became somewhat ‘normalised’ quickly after Sae-Jin reverted back to the human’s appearance.

“Ah, yes. I’m okay. My head’s a bit dizzy, that’s all.” (Kim Sae-Jin)

He massaged his temples as he spoke. Kim Yu-Rin helped him to a sofa nearby.

“To think, your Trait is to transform into the Azure Dragon, seriously... Ah, by the way, did you perform that magic spell?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...Well, yes, more or less.” (Sae-Jin)

“What do you mean, more or less? What, are you adding more, or subtracting less?”  
(TL: Uh, well, here in this line, the author tried another one of his infamous pun based jokes. I thought I could give a direct TL of it a shot, but... Well, I tried...)

Kim Yu-Rin's lips formed a thin smile as she threw him a joke an old man might say. Thinking that it was just impossible to disguise one's real age, Sae-Jin turned to look at her, and...

His eyes widened extra large. Around her mouth and jaw area, huge amount of dried blood could be found there...

“M, miss Yu-Rin?! You are hurt!” (Sae-Jin)

“Eh? But, I'm not in much pain, though?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“But it looks painful from here...” (Sae-Jin)

When he asked her in fluster, she waved her hands around in front of her as if it was nothing to worry about. However, as if bones had been smashed into fine powder, a part of her arm shook around this way and that in a shape of a tree branch snapped in the middle. Sae-Jin's jaw dropped to the floor after seeing this grotesque scene; Kim Yu-Rin belatedly noticed her own conditions, and got shocked out of her skull as well.

“Ahck!! What the hell?!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....Fut.”

A chuckle automatically crept up on his face as he witnessed her energetic reaction.

“No, wa, wait... This, this type of wounds can be healed with a potion. Thankfully, there is a potion over th...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“No, let me take a look first. It's no good to rely on potions if it's broken to this extent. What would you do if the bone heals in a weird way?” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin shook his head in disapproval and grabbed her arm. And after adjusting his Mana appropriately, he poured it under her skin.

“No, I'll be fine. When I get to a hospita... Huh?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The shattered bone pieces began shuffling towards their rightful positions, and then, fused together all on their own to revert back to the original shape. This was different from a potion that simply mended external wounds. This was ‘complete restoration’, nearing the boundaries of the long-extinct ‘recovery magic’.

“It’s finished. Try moving your arm.” (Sae-Jin)

“This, this is... What is going on?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The confused Kim Yu-Rin moved her arm this way and that, and became quite astonished by the result.

“Just what exactly did you do?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“I learned it. Just a bit, from that Bathory woman.” (Sae-Jin)

A dumbfounded expression formed on Kim Yu-Rin’s face. But, what could she do? The truth was right in front of her eyes, after all.

In actuality, the meaning of the phrase [Understand all knowledge of sorcery possessed by Bathory] wasn’t as simple as he ‘could use sorcery from now on’.

Its meaning was far more comprehensive than that. He would be able to replicate, in full, all the experience and confidence the Bathory bloodline had accumulated over its countless generations in order to become proficient in performing sorcery.

That was why, Sae-Jin could use at least around ‘33%’ (Degree of Advancement) of all those magic spells that were lost either due to incompetence of modern-day Wizards, or through lack of careful management. And luckily enough, ‘healing’ type magic was included in those magic spells he could perform.

“That, that crazy woman taught you, just like that?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“We negotiated a bit.” (Sae-Jin)

“You say negotiations... but how did you negotiate with someone as crazy as her?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

It was then. Yi Hye-Rin hesitantly approached Sae-Jin, seemingly having witnessed the earlier recovery process. No, it was more correct to say, she crawled, with her hands

on the floor and all.

“Guild Master, I think my spine is broken. I can’t, I can’t feel my lower torso at all...” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin was all tears as she looked up at Sae-Jin. He told her not to worry, and then, lifted her clothes just a wee bit. Well, a piece of fabric on the area of contact would be a hindrance, after all. Too bad, Yi Hye-Rin wasn’t aware of this.

“Euhgyack?!?! What are you doing?! Especially to a girl who can’t even move?! Captain!! Save me, Captain!!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“.....”

Yi Hye-Rin struggled with her two still-moving arms, but her ‘Captain’ just so happened to be in cahoots with him. Kim Yu-Rin tightly held on to Yi Hye-Rin’s upper torso.

“Please do it.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Huh? What, do what?! Stop!!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Your treatment, you idiot. Your treatment.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...Eh? Ah, aha...”

When Kim Yu-Rin replied, Yi Hye-Rin’s struggling subsided. Kim Sae-Jin lifted her top a little bit more. Her waist shuddered slightly, but there was no other reaction beside that. However, Kim Yu-Rin suddenly formed a mischievous expression, and rather fiercely, loudly slapped Yi Hye-Rin’s butt cheek.

“Ah!! What the hell!! Who did that?!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Hye-Rin, you really do have a nice body, don’t ya~~.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Eh, eh?? Ah, don’t, don’t do that!!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

*Slap, slap.*

That clear sound continuously rang out.



“S, stop it!! Ouch! Ha, Ha-ang!!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“...I’ll start with the treatment right away.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin felt that if he delayed any longer, he might end up getting implicated in a situation that might prove to be a bit embarrassing for a hot-blooded male like himself, so he quickly brushed Kim Yu-Rin away and placed his hands on the white skin of his ‘patient’. Just like he did with Kim Yu-Rin, Sae-Jin poured in his Mana.

*Flash!!*

Not too long after that, around the waist area where his Mana had permeated into, the bright blue light flashed suddenly.

And that was the end of the treatment.

“It’s finished. Try standing up, please.” (Kim Sae-Jin)

Yi Hye-Rin quickly tidied up her messy clothes and slowly moved her legs.

“Ohhh!! It’s working! It’s working!!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

With a deeply moved face, Yi Hye-Rin slowly got up. And after her treatment had concluded, this time it was Hazeline who hesitantly approached him. Seeing her with that trademark hood pulled over her head, she didn’t seem injured, so Sae-Jin got confused.

“Miss Hazeline? Are you injured somewhere?” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah, well, yo, you see, the thing is, Mister Sae-Jin...”

However, she could only open and close her mouth like a goldfish and couldn’t continue with what she wanted to say. Actually, she was scared of Sae-Jin finding her spotty head disgusting. She required a various preparations before she could brave it, such as taking in deep breaths, taking Cheongsimhwan tablets, etc, etc. *(TL: A Cheongsimhwan, literally meaning ‘Clear Mind Pill’, is a traditional Korean medicine that does what its name says. Apparently. Wikipedia has a page dedicated to it if you’re curious.)*

As she hesitated, though, Yi Hye-Rin’s hands shot out and pulled down Hazeline’s

hood.

“Eeek!! Hey, you crazy bi\*ch!!” (Hazeline)

“.....”

“.....”

Suddenly, the conference room fell into heavy silence. It was as if a ravenous *something* swallowed up all the noise.

Within this lethal stillness, Hazeline stood there as stiff as a stone statute, cold sweat falling off her face.

“Ah, uhm... I’m sorry, Unni.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Uh, N, no, no, it’s fine. I just got so surprised... It’s me who should apologise. I actually, you know, I don’t curse, like, a lot. I, uh, I got really spooked... I’m sorry.”

While the two of them were busy making up, Kim Sae-Jin was able to figure out the reason for Hazeline approaching him – her rather bald head. He smirked a little and placed his hand on her head.

And then, *pat, pat*.

He gently patted her head.

“...Ah?”

From Hazeline’s dazedly hanging mouth, a short exclamation was fired out.

“I’m not sure about the length, but I’ve restored it to a certain degree.” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin smiled and spoke to her. Hazeline’s two cheeks reddened deeply as she shyly nodded her head. However, Kim Yu-Rin’s knife-like glare stabbed into Hazeline’s back, so her body shook greatly before she retreated to the back in a hurry.

“T, thank you, Mister Sae-Jin!!” (Hazeline)

“No, I should thank you instead. By the way, Mister Joo Ji-Hyuk, are you feeling okay?”

(Sae-Jin)

“Yes, I’m alright.” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Joo Ji-Hyuk replied like a real man and took a big swig from a potion bottle.

“It’s just internal injuries. Huhuhuh.” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

“What about you, Yu Baek-Song?” (Sae-Jin)

“...Why no honorifics when calling me? I’m also fine.” (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song stretched her body languidly and walked to her Kaiser the second2nd.



After agreeing to hold meetings up regularly once every week in order to counter the sudden counterattack from Bathory and her goons, the unexpected kidnapping incident had somehow been resolved.

Of course, he couldn’t avoid being struck in the face, chest, chin, stomach and his head by the sobbing Yu Sae-Jung, but since he received some accidental level-up all of a sudden, one could say it got smoothed over all nice and easy in the end.

‘It is regrettable, though.’

Current place was Sae-Jin’s home, the one he hadn’t been back to in a long while. Kim Sae-Jin brushed Yu Sae-Jung’s head lying on his lap while swallowing his frustration.

Even with only ‘33%’ of knowledge, not only could he perform the instant transmission, he was also able to completely understand both the composition and the concept of the spells that formed the basis of this advanced sorcery.

It was definitely correct to feel satisfied by this alone, yet, the thoughts of the ‘Degree of Advancement’ reaching 50% if he had more time kept on popping up his head.

“Euh-euh. No way, nope.” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin roughly shook his head and got rid of those thoughts. If he had more time, then he might have gotten utterly murdered by Bathory who would have recovered

completely by then. So, there was no reason to get frustrated at all...

It was then. The scheduled TV drama suddenly stopped and a breaking news filled up the screen instead.

*[This is an emergency broadcast. A Boss-level Monster called 'Three-Headed Troll Ogre' has made its appearance. It's a Monster possessing two heads of an Ogre and one head of a Troll, and it is currently traversing the Gangwon Province's Monster field towards the residential area...]*

Definitely, it was an extraordinary and quite a grave situation, but such an occurrence was seen as a common thing now. The notion of spotting a Boss Monster in a year being one too many had been long since forgotten. Currently, one appeared every three weeks or so like a clockwork. So, besides the Monster's rather lengthy and convoluted name, there wasn't anything special about it...

However, the next words of the anchor were more than enough to steal Sae-Jin's attention completely.

*[Integrating other Ogres found in the Monster field and having formed an army, it is now understood that the 'Three-Headed Troll Ogre' and its troops are currently marching towards the village of the Hero Orcs.]*

"...Huh?"

Kim Sae-Jin opened his eyes widely. The village of the Hero Orcs...?!

When he woke up from the daze, he realised that he had stood up abruptly.

*Kwadang!!*

"Kkeuh-euh-euh... Ouch."

Thanks to that, Yu Sae-Jung ended up on the floor.

"Sae-Jung?"

"Seriously... What is it now, Oppa?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"No, uh, well... Don't you need to go to work?" (Sae-Jin)

Yu Sae-Jung replied with a frown while rubbing her aching waist.

“I got some off days after finishing the ‘Karerotte’ raid yesterday, but why are you asking me that?”

“Uh? Ah... No, it’s nothing.” (Sae-Jin)

“...What the. Don’t tell me, you thinking of doing something dangerous again, aren’t you?!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

She glared at him with questioning eyes. Although she was more or less on the mark, Sae-Jin shook his head and both hands in denial.

“Mm? But that’s not true? Where would I go, when I have you... Come over here. Come, come~.” (SaAe-Jin)

“Do you take me for a puppy or something...?”

Even though she spoke as much, Yu Sae-Jung still fell into Sae-Jin’s arms without much trouble. Sae-Jin gently patted her back while he waited for her to fall asleep once more. Thankfully, she did catch her Zs pretty quickly due to being pooped out from the previous day’s Boss raid. Sae-Jin carefully laid her down on the couch and slowly got up.

He wrote on a memo, “Something’s come up by the Guild. Be back soon”, put on some appropriate clothing, and left the house.

‘Seems that, for the first time in a long while, I’ll get to act out as the Orc...’

Since he might end up abusing his muscles a bit this time, he might as well stretch properly.



As the Hero Orc, Sae-Jin walked the Monster field while frowning in dilemma, wondering whether he should order the Orcs to retreat or not.

The mood of the Monster field was same as always. Within this suffocating stillness, where the only sounds heard were winds brushing by the tree branches, a certain dangerous air of Monsters popping out without a warning could be felt.

However, this place was only the Mid Tier hunting ground. For the 'Hero Orc Chieftain', there was no need for him to tense up at all.

Before long, as he walked proudly like an emperor, he saw the entrance to the village over yonder.

But, in front of the tightly-shut gate, someone who was definitely not an Orc – a human woman, was standing there.

Wearing an artifact-type coat that doubled as an armour on top of the Knights Order's rather-neat official attire, while a golden-coloured weapon was tied to her hips.

The sixth-strongest Knight in Korea, Kim Yu-Rin.

Surprised, Kim Sae-Jin took a couple of steps back. She then sensed a presence nearby and with her hand reaching down to her hips, she turned around to look.

"...Ah."

"Keum."

A pair of short sound effects, denoting the fact that they hadve recognised each other.

And so, a Lady Knight and an Orc got to stare at each other one more time.

# Chapter 147

## A Hero, an Orc, a Human (2)

The Orc and the Knight stared at each other for a long time. The Winter winds blew and issued a chilly wail as they brushed past the barren branches. From the dim and grey sky, tiny snowflakes fell and melted even before they could meet the ground.

And standing within the mother nature's deafening silence, just how long did their stillness continue?

Dhung-

A nearly imperceptible vibration shook the ground.

"Ah! Ex, excuse me!"

The first one to show a reaction was Kim Yu-Rin. She trotted towards the front of the Orc and stood there. Probably because of these cold months making her face paler than usual, her slightly reddened cheeks seemed to stand out even more.

"An enemy will be arriving soon. It's an Ogre... So, it's like, two heads are Ogres, and one head is a Troll, so, uh..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

However, it seemed like she was at her wits' end trying to explain. Well, it was true that the Boss's name was a bit on the cumbersome side. The Three-Headed Ogre, or to be more precise, Two-Ogre-Heads-One-Troll-Head-Blackskin Ogre – that was its full title. And her troubles came from her trying to explain while excluding the English words that formed all the important nouns in its name. *(TL: Okay, so, the author here wrote the Boss's name in Korean as romanised English words. When read, it still sounds like English words. Kim Yu-Rin is trying to say the English word "Head" and numbers with their corresponding Korean counterparts, but well, since I'm TLing it back to English, the tongue-twisting she has to go through has been lost in the translation, so to speak. My bad...)*

"Ah-woo... y, yeah, so, I'm trying to say... Do you by any chance know what an Ogre is?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

She gestured with her hands this way and that in sheer frustration, before deciding to explain the background information first.

“I know.” (Sae-Jin)

“Then, what about Ogres being stronger with more heads and with darker skin tone?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“I know.” (Sae-Jin)

“Whew-oo. What a relief. Right now, an Ogre with three heads, two heads out of three being that of Ogres’ and the other one being a Troll’s, and on top of that, its skin completely black, an Ogre with all these features, is heading this way.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

He already knew all these facts, but still, Kim Sae-Jin took a look around anyway. He could only see the barren and eerie Wintery scape as if all life had abandoned this place. Not one trace of humanity could be spotted at all.

“It’s you only?” (Sae-Jin)

“Eh? Ah, that’s right. It is only me here.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Hmph. Humans, no fight the Boss?” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah, the thing is...”

Seeing how Kim Yu-Rin was avoiding his gaze out of embarrassment, Sae-Jin could roughly guess what had happened.

The situation in Korea was rather difficult at the moment. After all, there were a total of three different Boss Monsters roaming around in the Korean peninsula right now – the demon Minotauros near Pyongyang, a Boss Monster called ‘Beherokbel’ near Busan, and this Ogre in the Monster field.

If one were to calculate the threat level posed by these Bosses, then the two near the residential areas of Pyongyang and Busan were a lot more urgent, indeed.

No matter how much praise was heaped on – the Hero Orcs, the Korean Orcs, whatever – at the end of the day, Orcs were still Orcs.



The Korean government couldn't care any less on whether these Orcs could survive or not; rather, they were hoping that the Orcs would delay the gigantic Ogre and its army for as long as possible.

"Only human fighting, is you? Right?" (Sae-Jin)

"...Yes. That's correct." (Kim Yu-Rin)

It was true that, when in the Orc Form, the tendencies and emotions of the Orc were stronger, but still, he could understand their reasoning. More than likely, it was Kim Yu-Rin who couldn't accept it, thus abandoning her orders and ended up coming all the way here.

"I suggest retreating from this place for now. We're currently building a trap between the border of the Monster field and the city limits, so if you were to cooperate with us there..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"No."

Kim Sae-Jin shook his head. Even if only death awaited them, no such thing as retreat existed for Orcs. Besides, they wouldn't die from the likes of some measly Ogres, too.

"We fight." (Sae-Jin)

His voice was thick, charming and yet quite aloof as well. Kim Yu-Rin could only gulp down her saliva and say nothing.

The words she finally spat out after a lengthy and silent deliberation were something Sae-Jin fully expected from her.

"In that case, please allow me to aid you." (Kim Yu-Rin)

She sounded tense, perhaps worried about being rejected.

However, Kim Sae-Jin didn't say anything and walked towards the interior of the village. Realising that this was him giving her the permission, Kim Yu-Rin followed him in with a huge grin on her face.

Entering the village after such a long time, they could see how greatly it had developed compared to before. Seeing the areas strictly separated into training facilities, food

storage, residential areas, smithies, etc, etc, was a rather impressive sight, even to the point where it was difficult to believe the Orcs were solely responsible for all these advancements.

“Wow... Really, everything has advanced by so much.”

Genuinely impressed by what she could see, Kim Yu-Rin took in the sights of the village with her eyes extra round. Kim Sae-Jin walked in and called for the Orcs to gather. Approaching with practiced discipline and a certain discernible dignity, the gathered Orcs easily numbered past one thousand.

Sae-Jin swept his gaze over the Orcs once, and shifted his gaze towards Kim Yu-Rin. Receiving his intense gaze, her face reddened deeply, but she pretended to not notice it and simply twirled her poor hair around her fingers.

Sae-Jin smirked and spoke.

“You, take command.”



“See, I told you. No one’s here.” (Bathory)

Around the same time.

Bathory surveyed the dark space she was in and spoke as if she was lamenting about something. The underground city that took so much effort and care to set up was no longer here, and the only thing left was completely, utterly desolate empty cavern.

In other words, the Nosferatus had all fled to somewhere. As if they had planned for this in advance, not one trace of them remained here. So much so, it was difficult to believe that a city had existed in this cavern, even.

“My sincerest apologies, my lady. We should have suspected something, the moment they built a village underground to evade our Lord’s eyes...”

The voice of an Elder tickled Bathory’s earbuds.

Yes, it was an ‘Elder’. On the account of the purity of the bloodlines, placed above that of an Apostle and just below her who just so happened to be the ruling class – these

were the Elders.

However, the voice of such a man was weak and pathetic.

It wasn't because of the advanced age, either. If that was the case, then when admonishing the lackeys below him, his attitude should remain timid and weak as well.

"Your sincerest apologies?" (Bathory)

"Yes, yes, my lady. We are truly sorry..."

"About what?" (Bathory)

"That is, that we fail to suspect..."

"But why are you sorry? It's Nosferatus who's at fault here." (Bathory)

"Uh..."

"Whatevs. All you lot are just old and decrepit like a flock of beasts, aren't you. You lack backbone, you don't have pride... No, wait. Maybe it's par for the course, since you don't have the necessary strength?" (Bathory)

The day before, Bathory went to meet the Vampire Lord even if her actions could be seen as disrespectful. But he wasn't even there. Instead, one of the Lord's faithful servants gave her an 'advice' – "Better stop with the unnecessary questions."

However, it was not easy to calm the ripples once it began to spread in her mind. At least, she would never be satisfied unless she dug the truth out with both her hands and feet, and confirm with her two eyes the truth that 'it's not true'.

"...Hey, everyone?" (Bathory)

Bathory spoke to dozens of Elders and Apostles who had followed her into this cavern with the most beautiful voice imaginable. Utterly charmed by her, they couldn't even meet her gaze and bowed deeply. Unfortunately for them, Bathory was planning to force them into making the most difficult decision in their lives.

"Decide." (Bathory)

With the voice so beguiling that it could even charm a nightingale and make it swallow its own tongue, she carried on with some seriously shocking words.

“Decide, whether you will follow the Lord, or me.” (Bathory)

This was tantamount to her declaring a rebellion. They were in this deep underground where the Vampire Lord’s eyes couldn’t reach, otherwise if they were in some wide-open field somewhere, they might have died of thirst after losing control of their desire to drink blood. Well, the Lord did possess the power to somehow control that particular instinct of all Vampires, after all.

“B, but, Lady Bathory, that is...”

“Everyone. It is regretful, but I... Well, I don’t think I can wait until the Fissure is fully opened up.” (Bathory)

Suddenly, around the radius of 500 metres, a dark-coloured Mana spread out and rose up in a dome-shape. It was a barrier preventing the Vampires from escaping.

“So, here’s the thing. I feel like I should at least let you in on a couple of things that might help you with making your choices. So, take a seat. Listen well to what I’m about to say, and make a wise decision afterwards, m’kay?” (Bathory)

Before anyone noticed it, a throne had appeared before her feet.

Elders and Apostles listened to her as they continued to grovel on the ground.



Kim Yu-Rin began her impassioned mission briefing in front of the gathered Orcs. However, she was simply far too energetic for a Knight about to face a huge scale battle. Most importantly, though, the subjects listening to her wholehearted explanations were Orcs. Although these guys weren’t really ‘normal’, Orcs were only acknowledged to be slightly smarter than a killer whale, so...

“Ogres are the personification of destruction that will fight and kill even among themselves. But the sole reason why these Ogres are uniting, is simply because of the Boss Ogre.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

She even resorted to drawing on the wall of the cave to illustrate her point – a lifeform

that might be the Three-Headed Ogre, and smaller lifeforms resembling other Ogres following the big one.

“When we kill the Ogre leader, the rest will lose the bond that holds them together and will start fighting each other.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The contents of the plan she was briefing the Orcs on were rather simple. Ignore other Ogres, and just defeat the Boss.

The big problem, though, was the fact that this Boss Ogre was an existence that exceeded common sense.

The results arising from the detailed scientific analysis performed by Monster researchers showed that, an Ogre’s strength would increase by four times with an addition of one more head. And this Boss Ogre had two more heads, so it was at least 16 times more powerful than a regular Ogre.

And on top of this, another variable in the form of ‘skin’ was added to the mix.

An Ogre was stronger the more achromatic its skin tone was. And the standard theory was that, the Ogres with the colours on either end of the achromatic spectrum, white or black, were twice as strong as regular Ogres with brown colour.

In other words, even with the most simplest calculations, this Boss Ogre was at least 32 times more powerful than a regular Ogre.

And to add further fuel to this unfortunate situation, one of the heads just so happened to belong to a Troll. A Troll, well known for its incredibly tenacious vitality that even made Knights grit their teeth in frustration.

“Of course, it will be difficult. This Boss Ogre is... unimaginably strong. However.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin shifted her gaze towards Sae-Jin in his Hero Orc Form and smiled deeply.

“However, it will be possible when everyone’s powers, the prowess of your Chief, and Cornlak is combined into one.” (Kim Yu-Rin)



An Ogre ate twice a day. After the meal, for almost half a day, it would not budge from its spot. Meaning, there was at least one or two days of time left before the Ogre army arrived near the village. Kim Yu-Rin utilised this time to train the Orcs as soon as the briefing came to an end. As if her training was harsh to the extreme, pitiful screams of Orcs continued to ring out through the day.

‘I should’ve come later...’

And right now, Sae-Jin the Orc was sitting in the Chieftain’s room while deeply regretting his decision. His fault was that, he didn’t know of the Ogre’s living habits in detail until now. He really thought that these Monsters would flood in crazily as exactly as their appearances suggested, but hell, who knew they liked taking so many breaks in between?

Of course, thanks to that, he was afforded enough time to prepare. Also, it was really smart of him to bring along his mobile phone via ‘Spiritualisation’...

[Yu Sae-Jung: Oppa, isn’t this just too much?! And why can’t you answer your phone!! You think a single memo is going to be enough?! You think I’ll stay here forever even after you treat me so poorly?... I’m not trying to break up with you, so don’t misunderstand me, okay.] [Yu Sae-Jung: No wait a minute. I take back what I said just now. I’m gonna stay right next to you like, forever. Even if Oppa tells me to take a hike, I’ll stay. Like a leech.] Sae-Jin found it hard to type with his extra-thick fingers. Unfortunately, he still needed to send his reply.

[I couldn’t tell you, you were still asleep. Besides, why are you complaining so much when I said I got things to take care of? I should be back in two days’ time so stop annoying me with this. One more complaint, and I won’t come back for a whole month.] (Sae-Jin)

As he was still in his Orc Form, the reply was bit more brusque and sharper than usual. He thought her feelings might be hurt from this, but her reply arrived less than ten minutes later. And well, her attitude seemed a lot softer than previously.

[...Sorry. It’s just that, I got really surprised because you left without saying anything... By the way, are you angry at me for something I’ve done, Oppa?] (Yu Sae-Jung)

[No, I'm not. I really want to see you like crazy right now, so stop stimulating my thoughts, okay?] (Sae-Jin)

His words were rather rough in so many respects.

[(An emoji of a hamster holding a heart) Aah-iiiing, what the~~. Ehehe~~. Got it, so hurry home~~.] (Yu Sae-Jung)

[I'll be back as soon as I can. (A heart emoji)]

As he finished up his reply, he could hear the gentle footsteps outside his room. Sae-Jin quickly absorbed the phone back into his body. It was seriously lightning-quick.

Knock, knock-

There was no need to knock, though – since there was no door to begin with.

“What is it?” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Yu-Rin's head peeked out from the edge when he spoke up. As if she just came out from a shower, her glistening, wet hair cascaded down.

“.....Where is Cornlak?”

Hearing her cautious questioning, Sae-Jin lightly tapped the ground. Having been summoned earlier, Cornlak violently rushed into his cavern chamber. As soon as it entered, Cornlak jumped on top of Kim Yu-Rin and began the attack of affection on her for a while.

Dust rose up and dirt thickly permeated the air.

Sae-Jin's brows narrowed deeply, and was about to shout out, when...

“Ahahahaht! Wait, wait!! I got it, I got it, Cornlak!! I said, I got it...”

...He couldn't, after seeing Kim Yu-Rin's bright smile and her happy expression.

# Chapter 148

## A Hero, an Orc, a Human (3)

“...Eh? What do you mean? What contest?” (Sae-Jin)

– *“Nominally, it’s an exhibition to see who has contributed to the society more, but is structured like a contest, sir. The government has made the official request just now. Apparently, they wish to comfort the citizens during this time of great unrest.”* (Jo Hahn-Sung)

Kim Sae-Jin used an excuse of him becoming restless when being idle to leave the village for a short while. Kim Yu-Rin did annoy him by reminding him that they needed to install various traps soon, but when he asked for just one hour, she had no choice but to reluctantly let him go.

“Well, if the intentions are good, I won’t say no, but... But, how will a contest like that help with comforting the masses?” (Sae-Jin)

He found a spot within the forest that had no people whatsoever, changed back to his human form, and the very first thing he did was to have a sort-of reunion with Yu Sae-Jung (over a period of 50 minutes) over the phone; now, the person on the line was Jo Hahn-Sung, who said he had business-related matters to discuss.

And the main topic was hosting The Monster’s so-called ‘Exhibition for Contributions to the society at large’.

Borrowing the name of ‘Exhibition’, this contest’s main aim was to take a closer look at the people within the five categories of Magic, Knights, Art, Alchemy, and society, and by sussing out who had contributed to the world at large the most, admit them in as the newest members of The Monster Guild. And if five categories proved to be a bit too much, then only the two of ‘Magic’ and ‘Knights’.

– *“I thought the same initially, but after hearing them out, I believe it’s plausible after all, sir. During this troubled times, this contest has the potential to become something that the citizens, even if it’s only by a little bit, could become passionate about and be involved in.”* (Jo Hahn-Sung)



“Well, if it turns out like that, then that will be wonderful, but will the citizens really focus on this contest?” (Sae-Jin)

No, it was dead certain they would focus on it. First of all, the process would be televised in full.

However, to say they were going to rouse the depressed masses or some such when they were simply trying to find a new member for the Guild, well, that kind of was embarrassing and not to mention, made him a bit hesitant as well.

– *“Yes, of course. Not just the country, I’m sure the world will focus on us, sir. Back then, when we picked Director Yi Yu-Jin, fanbases were formed around those so-called strong favourites and they started fighting amongst each other, you see. As we will be officially announcing the candidates, I believe it will get far more heated this time around, sir.”* (Jo Hahn-Sung)

“...Really? But still, wouldn’t it be troublesome if this thing becomes too successful? I fear, we might end up receiving criticism about lowering the vigilance of the public or something...” (Sae-Jin)

– *“The current climate is certainly quite depressing, but I believe being overly fearful is even worse, sir. Even the government thinks that, rather than the problem of vigilance, it is better to lower the excess amount of fear among the public.”* (Jo Hahn-Sung)

Kim Sae-Jin tilted his head.

“But, just by hosting an exhibition like this one, people’s fears will lessen?” (Sae-Jin)

– *“If we choose a few candidates as the new Guild members, then we would be able to advertise nationwide that there are more than enough talented and hardworking Knights or Wizards in our country that are good enough to enter The Monster. That should be good enough, sir.”* (Jo Hahn-Sung)

“Aha. Hmm... In that case, alright, please go ahead.” (Sae-Jin)

– *“Yes, sir. Will do.”*

Ending the call there, Sae-Jin ‘Spiritualised’ the phone into his body.

And if he were to add in something slightly unnecessary here, the Spiritualised mobile

phone granted a rather peculiar ability to the person performing the technique. The words on the alert window was thus:

[A smartphone has been absorbed via Spiritualisation. By using the eyes of the host, photos and even video footage can be captured.]

Although it did sound kinda fun and slightly interesting, there was no other usage beside that.



“You’re ten minutes late.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin’s mouth pouted as if to pierce Sae-Jin with them. He scratched the back of his neck and offered up an excuse that wasn’t really an excuse.

“I can also be late.” (Sae-Jin)

“Hmm..... Fine. Let’s get going already. To set the traps.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Thankfully, she didn’t complain unnecessarily. Kim Yu-Rin simply grabbed his wrist tightly and moved her feet towards the area where the traps were to be installed. That’s right, she was holding his wrist. Although this much skinship should be nothing, the person doing it being who she was, Sae-Jin ended up feeling rather weirded out.

“Oii. Your plan, it will work?” (Sae-Jin)

So, he asked an unnecessary question deliberately, so he could pull his hand out at the same time. However, she held his wrist with an unexpectedly strong grip and he couldn’t free himself.

“Yes. You don’t have to worry. The odds of our victory are far greater than our defeat, actually. And since foot soldiers are fighting foot soldiers, and leaders are fighting the leaders, the casualties should be minimised greatly as well.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The contents of the ‘plan’ Kim Yu-Rin was talking about with a healthy smile went

something like this.

According to the detection radar of TM, it was suspected that the Ogre army consisted of 50~60 individuals that formed marching columns of 10.

And the Three-Headed Ogre was accompanied by 4 Two-Headed Ogres that acted like its 'royal guards', supposedly showing off the *majesty* of the commander in the middle of these marching columns.

However, Ogres were known for their low intelligence. That was why, Kim Yu-Rin decided to go with the most basic tactic of them all – traps and ambushes.

Firstly, traps. Using the labour skills of the Orcs, pits would be dug out, and then, a portion of the Ogre army would be drawn there.

Even though an Ogre with two heads wouldn't fall into an obvious trap since it was marginally smarter, an Ogre was still an Ogre at the end of the day. Beat it up good and make it taste more pain than it could handle, then the rage would cause that 'intelligence' to drop to the rock bottom, and the Ogre would follow the bait nice and easy.

"No other things to do, beside that one?" (Sae-Jin)

"Yes. We'll build only build traps for today and return." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Twenty minutes of walking later, Kim Yu-Rin and the Orc army arrived near the vicinity of a river.

Creation of pitfall traps, where the ground was dug out and sharp spikes installed at the bottom, was done in a jiffy. As expected of the outstanding labour skills of the Orcs that even made Monster researchers astonished.

"It's finished~!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

The final step, covering up the pitfalls with grass also came to an end really quickly. Kim Yu-Rin declared leisurely while wiping away sweat drops on her forehead.

Satisfaction and happiness were quite evident on her beaming face, but Sae-Jin's feelings were a bit different from hers. No matter what, this whole place screamed *this here is a trap*~~, so this was kinda...

“...Kinda shabby.” (Sae-Jin)

“It’s going to be fine. Because of their big bodies, Ogres don’t pay attention to what’s underneath their feet, anyway.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Hmm...”

When Sae-Jin the Orc surveyed the covered up traps with unsure face, Kim Yu-Rin told him not to worry and slapped his back.

“It’s going to be fine, so let’s go back. I’m tired.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

After that, she again grabbed Sae-Jin’s wrist and began leading him away.

As if to prevent him from yanking his hand away, her grip was really tight.

Seeing this, her action was definitely not subconscious, but deliberate. Sae-Jin chuckled and rather than pulling away, grabbed her hand instead.

“...Ah?!”

Her face reddened in the blink of an eye, at least initially, but soon enough, it was dyed in the colours of agony next.

“Ah-ahck!! Ah, wha, what are you doing?! Hey, it hurts! I said, this hurts!! Kkyaack!! It’s gonna break, break!! The Orc, the Orc caught me!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Obvious. Orcs catch people.” *(TL: Sigh. Yet another pun-based joke that doesn’t work when TLed into English. Well, I tried and failed again. Here, ‘catch’ in Korean is supposed to imply ‘to kill’.)*

“Eeee, eeeek!!!”

The sight of her calling out for other Orcs and even Cornlak’s help was quite pitiful.



Orcs returned to their village completely fatigued from the installation of pitfall traps.

They pulled out unidentified meat from the food storage, grilled it and consumed it.

Then, some sparred for a while, before retiring to their sleeping quarters.

However, Kim Yu-Rin, who was definitely not an Orc, didn't have her own place. So, she found a suitably quiet spot on the cavern's floor and lied down while using Cornlak's belly as her pillow. Even if she was a trained Knight, it still was a cold place to get a shut-eye.

"...Hmm." (Sae-Jin)

As he was exiting his own dwelling in a bit of hurry to make an urgent phone call, Sae-Jin discovered her like sleeping this, so he brought along a thick blanket from somewhere and covered her with it.

But the senses of a Knight were always alert; as soon as the blanket covered her, Kim Yu-Rin's eyes opened up half-way. The sight of a flustered Orc filled up those pair of jewel-like eyes.

Kim Yu-Rin quietly studied him for a bit of time, before smiling lazily and spoke in a sleepy voice.

"I was feeling really cold just now, so... Thank you." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"....."

Her gentle smile and drowsy eyes caused his heart to skip a beat, but Sae-Jin the Orc did his best to indifferently nod his head and returned to the Chieftain's quarters. No, he tried to, before something caught his eye.

And that was a stuffed doll of an Orc, peeking out from a leather bag by Cornlak's tail.

Unaware of the situation, the grinning Kim Yu-Rin followed his gaze and looked towards where he was staring at. Then, with a short but loud scream of "Ahck!" she jumped up in the air and hurriedly took away the doll.

"I, I, I didn't bring it here, you know?! One of the Orcs made it for me, you see?!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"...One of my Orcs?" (Sae-Jin)

"Ye, yes. His skill was really great, especially for an Orc..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

“That, looks like me?” (Sae-Jin)

The appearances of Kim Sae-Jin’s Orc Form and other Orcs had distinct differences. It was to the point where a dumb-a\*s monkey would end up thinking, *‘Oh, he must be their leader’*, or even, *‘why is he more handsome than the others?’*

Just as Yi Hye-Rin alluded to in the past, his appearance was indeed better than certain sections of humanity.

“.....Completely, definitely, it’s not you. Seriously, you must be suffering from the prince syndrome...” (TL: the author wrote “도끼 병” which is a slang term that doesn’t have any direct translation. The closest I can think of is “princess syndrome” but since the MC isn’t a girl, I changed it “prince” instead.)

She stealthily hid the leather bag behind her.

“Okay, then.” (Sae-Jin)

He smirked and returned to the Chieftain’s quarters.

She must have thought she made a good excuse, since he could hear her sighs of relief coming from behind him.

And after Sae-Jin returned to his quarters, it took a considerable amount of time before he realised that he was actually trying to go outside in order to make a phone call.



“They come.” (Sae-Jin)

In the far off distance, even if one didn’t open their eyes wide, the gigantic silhouettes could still be spotted. A casual glance was enough to determine that their numbers easily exceeded 60. Although it was only 60 in number, Ogres were powerful high-level Monsters that lived in the upper Mid Tier hunting grounds and above.

It was not easy to fight against a single roaming Ogre, so seeing that many of them in one spot, even if they weren’t all that well organised, was enough to make Kim Yu-Rin tense up.

“Have you gotten familiarised with the plan?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Yes.” (Sae-Jin)

Right in the middle of the somewhat sloppy 10-man marching columns of the Ogres, an Ogre with especially humongous body stood tall. Three heads and jet-black skin – it was extremely rare to see Ogres possessing either one of those features, yet this greedy bastard had them all.

Once that Ogre army arrives at the predetermined location, 950 Hero Orcs would appear from both flanks and distract them, which should cause around 40 Ogres to break the formation.

When that number broke loose from the formation, then it would be the turn of Kim Yu-Rin, riding on top of Cornlak. She would gift enormous amount of pain on the Boss Ogre and its lackeys, thereby luring them into the ambush location where Sae-Jin and his company were waiting.

Afterwards, they would kill off those annoying small fries first, and when the Boss Ogre was the only one left, Kim Yu-Rin would use her Trait to knock it out for around one minute. Then, everyone would attack it.

“Knocking it out, you confident?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes. Although it was just a summon, I did knock out a Leviathan for five minutes in the past. To be precise, it wasn’t knocking it out but making it fall asleep, though.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Hmm.”

Sae-Jin the Orc nodded his head. Since he personally witnessed that scene, there was no need to question her.

“Then, I should be on my way. You should also get to the ambush location as well.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Wait.” (Sae-Jin)

Just as Kim Yu-Rin grasped the reins of Cornlak...

“Before you go, take.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin handed over a pennant featuring the insignia of the Hero Orcs to her. It was one of those super expensive ‘passive artifacts’ that boosted the performance of the person simply by having it on the body.

“A sign, you, our comrade.” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah...?”

Kim Yu-Rin dazedly looked at the pennant, before gently receiving it with both her hands and she brought it to her chest.

“...Thank you.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

*\*SFX for a loud calling of a horn\**

It was at this very moment when the horn of an Orc Great Warrior blew. With that as the signal, Orcs moved towards their assigned positions in a swift, disciplined manner. 950 warriors divided into two equal halves and went to left and right, while the remaining 50 Orcs carefully made their way towards the location where Kim Yu-Rin was to lure in the Boss Ogre.

“Please go ahead and wait for me.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

As her eyes got wet by the depths of her emotions, she climbed aboard Cornlak and headed off towards the battlefield.



There was virtually no change to the low intelligence of the Ogres; the battle unfolded exactly as Kim Yu-Rin had planned. Around 40 or so Ogres got split up and fell into the pitfall traps, while the Boss Ogre got struck real hard by Kim Yu-Rin, and unable to calm its overwhelming rage, it crazily chased after her.

“They come. Get ready.” (Sae-Jin)

20 paces.

20 paces later, and twenty-odd Ogres would arrive where Sae-Jin was. He spoke to other Orcs and took in a deep breath.



*Khoong, khoong, khoong, khoong!!*

Numerous and chaotic footsteps – no doubt, the Two-Headed Ogres and the Three Headed Boss Ogre were mixed up in there.

Sae-Jin closed his eyes and left his body to the five senses, with the notable exception of his sight. Well, to be perfectly clear, the gigantic bodies of Ogres were too big for his eyes to fully capture, anyways. So, the closer he got to these Monsters, the greater hindrance his vision would become.

Sensing the incoming enemies with his entire being, Sae-Jin grasped his mace tightly. He drank the Spiritualised ‘Goblin’s Rage’ potion and activated the ‘Warrior of Reversal’ as well.

*Khoong, khoong, khoong.*

As his senses expanded, their footsteps became slower and slower.

*Khoong, khoong, khoong.....*

And so, when he heard the third footstep...

Pouring all his soaring might and overflowing rage, he swung his mace as hard as he could at the ankle of the Ogre that was about to go past him.

*KWAHAHAHANG!!!*

The destructive strike possessing the terrifying might utterly smashed apart the ankle of a Two-Headed Ogre in one swing. Losing one of its legs, this Ogre collapsed on the ground, and many Orcs descended upon the fallen creature.

However, Kim Sae-Jin’s eyes remained closed. The Hero Orc’s body was glowing in bright red, and his mace swung out in search for yet another victim.

*KWAHANG!!*

A huge shock wave shook the entire mountainside.

# Chapter 149

## A Hero, an Orc, a Human (4)

Although the Orc Chieftain's body was far smaller than an Ogre's, his battle prowess was, simply put, overwhelming.

Whenever his mace came in contact with the flesh of Ogres, their limbs and bits of the body would be ripped asunder. When the mace hit the ground, a deep crater was formed. And even when swung in the empty air, the mace created powerful ripples of shock waves that danced like crashing waves.

Since the most powerful combat force of the Ogre army, the Boss Ogre, was tied up by Kim Yu-Rin riding on the back of Cornlak, the overall battle situation was greatly favouring the Orcs. Right now, 51 Orcs were busy beating down on twenty-odd Ogres, and more importantly, these Orcs were not just ordinary Monsters either.

'It's going well.' (Sae-Jin)

From just about everywhere, grotesque sounds of maces hitting flesh and the said flesh being ripped off resounded out, nonstop. And as the time continued to flow on, sounds of giant *things* crashing down to the ground intermittently shook the world. That was the countless Ogres falling down while leveling the trees of the forest.

As more and more Ogres fell, 51 Orcs became progressively more drunk by the sweet taste of victory and moved even more energetically.

30 minutes later.

They only required 30 minutes to kill off all the other Ogres besides the Boss. To kill 20 Ogres, only 19 Orcs lost their lives in the process.

Only then, Kim Yu-Rin stopped circling around the Boss Ogre to infuriate it, and climbed off Cornlak's back.

*Khoong, khoong, khoong, khoong!!*

In front, the Boss Ogre was rushing towards her direction while blowing his top off with boiling rage, and behind her, Orcs covered in Ogre blood were getting ready for the final showdown.

“Everyone, block the Boss Ogre, please.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The initial battle had ended only about a second ago, yet, with a single word from her, the Orcs madly dashed towards the Boss Ogre. And as they delayed the Boss, she readied her Gungnir. The pure-white blade shined in brilliant golden light as it morphed into a spear-like shape.

The ‘purpose’ of this attack was simple.

‘One minute of unconsciousness.’

Normally, a minute was a really short amount of time, but it was a different story during a battle. No one would dare to assign a value to one minute of time during an intense battle like this one.

“...!!!”

However, unexpectedly, Mana contained within her entire body got sucked out into her weapon. This meant that it was not possible to carry out her ‘purpose’, so Kim Yu-Rin had no choice but to withdraw her Mana back from Gungnir.

‘But, why?’

Mana she couldn’t withdraw in time left her body for good, and her remaining reserve was only 50%. She didn’t do anything, yet ended up losing half of her fighting strength, in other words. Obviously, she couldn’t comprehend this situation. Her Trait allowed her to put a summoned Leviathan to sleep for five minutes, yet why couldn’t she do the same to an Ogre...?

“Kkheuaack!!”

The screams of Orc Warriors floated into the stupefied Kim Yu-Rin’s ears.

While she remained dazed, time marched on and Orcs were getting killed.

‘If I no longer have teeth, then I will use my gums!’

Just as she resolved herself and gritted her teeth...

From behind the giant Ogre, a cute lifeform flapped its wings and flew up into the air. It was a familiar enough shape to instantly rouse her anger simply by looking at it. And it was none other than the same bastard that stole away her Mana when she was trapped underground with the Orc.

The 'Korean crow-tit', that white bird.

"That f\*cker!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

They said enemies would encounter each other in the middle of a narrow bridge. She so badly wanted to pluck out every single feather off that thing and BBQ it right there and then...

But Kim Yu-Rin did her best to calm her trembling hands and her madly pounding heart. For now, she really needed to take care of the Boss Ogre first.

She poured Mana back into Gungnir once more. She didn't bother with placing a 'purpose' this time around. No, all she wanted to do was to pour every drop of remaining Mana into her weapon and pierce the heart of the Boss, that was all.

*Wuwuwuwu...*

Gungnir resonated with her Mana and glistened brightly in golden light. Emitting a divine aura and causing tremors to break out on the ground, the Gungnir fired off a single white line of blinding energy beam.

*KAH-AH-AH-AH!!*

The firing and hitting the target happened almost simultaneously. The heart of the Three-Headed Ogre was penetrated in an instant, and Sae-Jin the Orc, who had timed his jump to perfection, poured all his strength into the mace and fiercely struck the back of one of its heads.

Without a doubt, Kim Yu-Rin's lethal attack on the Boss's chest wasn't going to be enough. However, it was now combined with the terrifyingly fierce strike from Sae-Jin as well, so the Ogre didn't even have the chance to show off its infamously tenacious vitality.

*\*SFX for a pathetic roar of a dying Monster\**

In the end, the Boss Ogre issued a low cry as it slowly collapsed on the ground. Following that, excited roars of the Orcs spread throughout the mountainside.

“No, wait!! It’s not over... Kkheuck!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

However, it was still early for the victory celebration. She needed to let the Orcs know. Unfortunately, Kim Yu-Rin could only grasp near her heart and fall to her knees. It was an adverse side effect of extracting too much Mana all at once.

Thankfully, though, the words she wanted to say, Sae-Jin shouted out loudly instead.

“It’s not over yet!!... Oi, you okay?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin approached Kim Yu-Rin while maintaining the Orc’s vigilance.

“Yes, I’m fin.....!!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

At that moment, Kim Yu-Rin dazedly froze up. Soon afterwards, a huge shadow was cast over his head and to the ground. Sae-Jin hurriedly turned around, and found the Boss Ogre with its eyes shooting out chillingly dangerous light throwing a punch that burned with intense jet-black energy.

Sae-Jin pulled Kim Yu-Rin into an embrace and immediately retreated from there.

*KWAHANG!!!*

Fortunately, the Boss’s attack was one step late. Unfortunately, right in that moment, towards the direction he had retreated, a Breath attack rushed in.

“Kkhyaaah!!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Sae-Jin quickly chucked Kim Yu-Rin away to a far off distance with a strength that could easily throw her several mountains over, and evaded the Breath. However, this Breath attack curved around the corner and followed his path of retreat. At the same time, the swift punch of the Three-Headed Ogre flew in as well.

Funnily enough, the Boss’s punch should have been a lot slower than this. But it was not so. Even the Monster’s eyes gleamed differently. They were far more violent and

oppressive than ever before.

Only then did he remember. One or two fortunate Trolls, when somehow surviving the near-death experience, would go on a rampage akin to going through the “terminal lucidity”.

“Sh\*t!!”

The destructive fist came flying in along with the Breath attack. If Sae-Jin evaded the fist, then he’d be struck by the Breath, and if he evaded the Breath, then it would be the fist, instead.

However, there was one other option left to choose. And the instincts of the Orc pulled Sae-Jin towards this choice.

Firstly, he increased the flow of blood within his body. Then, at the same time, he used the Skill ‘Warrior of Reversal and overlapped it with the increased blood flow. And finally, he added in the increased physical strength and defense he ‘gained’ from the Bathory woman.

This was the essence of purely chasing after the most powerful physical body attainable. And this feeling gave the most profound sense of enhancement ever felt in his entire life, to the slave creature born only to fight – the Orc.

Firmly standing on the ground, he began to endure the Breath attack that came washing over him. Because he was rescuing Kim Yu-Rin, he had to discard his mace some time ago. But that didn’t matter anymore. Just his bare fist was enough...

*KWAHAHAHANG-!!*

The fists of the Ogre and the Orc collided in the air. A huge explosion blew up like a blinding lightning where the two fists met and dyed the world in pure white, while the ground below disintegrated without a trace.

Nothing could be seen. But still, Kim Sae-Jin felt the Ogre’s arm in contact with his fist slowly disintegrate as well, and he closed his eyes.

[Condition cleared: Commitment and sacrifice.] [The Monster Form, the Orc Chieftain

will be upgraded to the Great Orc Chieftain.] [Acquired the Orc's unique Skill, the 'Essence of the Orc'.] [The 'Essence of the Orc' resonates with 'Bathory's muscle composition & bone density' as well as the 'Mana Body'!! Special property, 'The Most Pure Divine Body' will be...]



Kim Sae-Jin's eyes slowly opened within the blurry darkness.

*That goddamn white bird...*

Seeing that the first thing he did was to get angry, it looked like he was still in his Orc Form. But there were lots of problems; he could blink just fine, but his body wouldn't budge an inch. Perhaps this was the expected result, after having been hit by the Boss Ogre as well as taking a Breath bath all over his body.

"Hmm..."

His voice still managed to leak out, somehow.

Suddenly, he got curious. He did fight to the death with the Boss Ogre, but what happened to that white bird? That bastard's body seemed to have gotten a little bit bigger than before, too.

"...Yawn~."

He felt sleepy and a yawn came out all on its own. He rolled his eyes somehow and took a look at his own body that resembled a charcoal. This was on the level of a miracle, him surviving all of that. It seemed that he had unconsciously used up as much as 30 healing potions in one go, judging by the alert window for the Spiritualisation that said [90/100].

And just how much time passed by since then?

Suddenly, he thought of something else.

'...This might be the good time to retire the Orc Chief, isn't it?'

Currently, the most useful Monster Forms had been set in stone already. Even though this Form had evolved into the Great Chieftain, this was the limit for the Orc as a

species. So, it made sense to utilise the limitless Leviathan Form as well as the Lycanthrope that had near endless potential all of the time from now on. As an aside, he had given up on his Goblin Form a long time ago.

But, before he could do that, there was one sticking point to consider.

Kim Yu-Rin.

She had this ‘special’ feeling towards the Orc. And he couldn’t tell exactly what type of feeling this was. He could only suspect that it was a bit deeper than friendship or loyalty felt towards one’s comrades.

Beside all of that, though – the one thing he had to do first, was...

“...For now, I should really go home.” (Sae-Jin)

He had no idea how many days had passed since the battle. And there was someone waiting for him back home. Sae-Jin changed into the Leviathan Form and summoned up what little Mana he had left to activate the ‘sorcery’.



The destination for his instant transmission was the underground secret conference room. He came here, since Yu Sae-Jung might get shocked by his sudden intrusion – although she knew that he could change into the Leviathan already. Other Forms were still a secret from her, though.

“It was only a day?!” (Sae-Jin)

As soon as he arrived, he checked the calendar first, yet it only had been a day. What a relief that was. Breathing out a sigh of relief, Sae-Jin fell back down on the couch, and as sleep slowly encroached on him, he thought about calling Yu Sae-Jung on the phone...

“...You’ve returned?”

“Mommy?!?!” (Sae-Jin)

He got shocked out of his slumber by a foreign voice greeting from somewhere and hurriedly shot up from the couch.



The voice belonged to Lillia.

“Wha, what the hell?! What are you doing in here?” (Sae-Jin)

“We ran away. Our plan failed, after all.” (Lillia)

“.....Ah, aha.”

“And also, Mister Sae-Jin personally told us this as well – to re-establish our sanctuary below The Monster’s grounds and continue living in the meantime.” (Lillia)

She came closer while talking to him, and handed over a bottle of potion.

“You shouldn’t sleep like that. Please, drink a potion before falling into a slumber.” (Lillia)

“Oh, uh, thanks.” (Sae-Jin)

*Gulp, gulp-*

Since he drank a potion, he thought might as well, and switched on the TV.

During the short news broadcast informing the viewers about the chaos near Pyongyang being taken care of, the incident related to the Orc came on and took up the top billing.

In short, Kim Yu-Rin had survived, thankfully. Apparently, Cornlak had rescued her amidst the explosion that resembled a nuclear warhead going off, caused by the Breath attack and two fists violently colliding. The end result was that a radius of 10 KM around the blast area had become nothing but ash and collapsed into utter ruin.

In other words, the fate of the remaining Orcs were unknown.

Did they all perish? Sae-Jin felt his chest tighten after hearing the news.

“That’s causing quite a bit of chaos at the moment. I hear that the Orc sacrificed himself to kill a dangerous Boss Monster?” (Lillia)

“...Ha, haha...”

“Miss Hazeline was really stunned when she heard the news, saying what if you really died there. All the media outlets are reporting that the Orc Chieftain and the Boss Ogre engaged in a bitter battle to the death and both died in the end.” (Lillia)

Kim Sae-Jin stared at Lillia and smirked.

“Tell them to alter ‘Chieftain’ to ‘Great Chieftain’ instead.” (Sae-Jin)

“Fuhut.”

Lillia’s eyes slightly arched up. Sae-Jin’s brows narrowed instead, seeing her relaxed reaction.

“Hang on. Why are you smiling like that as if you knew already?” (Sae-Jin)

“Did I do that?” (Lillia)

“...What the. So you really knew about it already?” (Sae-Jin)

“You can think of it any way you like. Well, please excuse me. I have too many matters to attend to.” (Lillia)

She got up from her seat after handing over a mobile phone to him.

“Also, you should not forget to call the Madam of the house.” (Lillia)



On a particularly clear afternoon, Sae-Jin paid a visit to Kim Yu-Rin’s hospital room. As soon as he cracked open the door, he spotted Cornlak, its body much smaller now. He sent a mental order to the wolf, telling it to act like it hadn’t recognised him. Cornlak loyally carried out his order and remained lying down on the floor.

“Oh, hello Mister Kim Sae-Jin. Nice to see you again.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin greeted him with a bright smile that was completely out of his expectations. Flustered slightly, Sae-Jin sat down on a nearby sofa while feeling rather disappointed for some reason.

“How are you feeling?” (Sae-Jin)

“I’m feeling fine, thank you.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...That’s a relief.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin replied in confusion and shifted his gaze to the LED TV’s screen. Contents regarding the Hero Orc were on at the moment. And probably because of the programme, not much of a conversation happened between the two of them.

Sae-Jin was cautiously observing the situation, while Kim Yu-Rin was looking at the TV with a healthy smile on her face.

*– The Chieftain of the Hero Orcs is believed to have lost his life during the great explosion. Countless citizens, saddened by the loss, have formed lengthy queues to pay respects, and...*

While listening to the anchor’s voice, Sae-Jin mustered up enough courage and asked Kim Yu-Rin.

“...That Orc, did he really die?” (Sae-Jin)

“Nope.”

Her swift and assured answer surprised Kim Sae-Jin. While clutching her right fist tightly, she continued.

“Definitely, he’s alive somewhere.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Then, she looked at him and smiled brightly.

He belatedly discovered the Orc’s pennant clutched within her right hand. He, too, smiled along with her.

“Oh, that’s right. Guild Master?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Yes?”

Winds gently blew in from the open windows and scattered her hair like the falling and dancing petals of a cherry blossom tree. As he was thinking, *how beautiful*, she spoke to him in a resolute voice.

“Maybe, just maybe, I’m asking you, but... Do you still wish to seduce me?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....I beg your pardon?!”



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